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Family Nutrition Programs

The Evolution of SNAP Modernization Initiatives in Five States

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The Evolution of SNAP Modernization Initiatives in Five States

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

ABD	aged, blind, and disabled medical assistance in Utah and Washington
ACA	Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010
ACCESS	Automated Community Connection to Economic Self Sufficiency, Florida's online application
ACES	Automatic Client Eligibility System in Washington
ADP	automated data processing in Georgia
AMS	ACCESS Management System in Florida
AREN	Additional Requirements for Emergent Needs in Washington
ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009
Bay State CAP	Bay State Combined Application Project
BBCE	broad-based categorical eligibility
BEACON	Benefit Eligibility and Control Online Network in Massachusetts
BENDEX	Beneficiary and Earnings Data Exchange in Washington
CAFE	Cash Assistance and Full Engagement in Massachusetts
CAP	Combined Application Project
CHIP	Children's Health Insurance Program
CMU	Case Maintenance Unit in Florida
COMPASS	Common Point of Access to Social Services in Georgia
CPTS	Community Partner Tracking System in Florida
CRU	Change Reporting Unit in Florida
CSC	Customer Service Center in Washington
CSD	Community Services Division in Washington
CSO	Community Services Office in Washington
DCA	Diversion Cash Assistance in Washington
DCF	Department of Children and Families in Florida

DFCS   Division of Family and Children Services in Georgia

DMH   Department of Mental Health in Massachusetts

DMR   Department of Mental Retardation in Massachusetts

DMS   Document Management System

DOS   Direct Operating System

DSHS   Department of Social and Health Services in Washington

DTA   Department of Transitional Assistance in Massachusetts

DWS   Department of Workforce Services in Utah

D&R   Data & Reports system in Florida

EAEDC   Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children in Massachusetts

EBT   electronic benefits transfer

EFAP   Emergency Food Assistance Program in Washington

eFind   data verification system in Utah

EOHHS   Executive Office of Health and Human Services in Massachusetts

eRep   Electronic Resource and Eligibility Product in Utah

ESD   Eligibility Services Division in Utah

ESP   Emergency Services Program in Massachusetts

ESS   Economic Self Sufficiency Program in Florida

FFF   Food for Florida Disaster Food Stamp Program

FLODS   FLORIDA Operational Data Store

FLORIDA   Mainframe eligibility determination system in Florida

FNS   Food and Nutrition Service

FQHC   Federally Qualified Health Center

FTE   Full-time equivalent

FY   fiscal year

GROW   Georgia Reengineering Our Work

HIU   Hub Imaging Unit in Washington

IMS   Intake Management System in Florida

IVR   interactive voice response

LIHEAP   Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program

LMS   Learning Management System

MAP   My Accounts Page in Massachusetts

MOU   memorandum of understanding

NSLP   National School Lunch Program

OASDI   Old-age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance

OFI   Office of Family Independence in Georgia

OIG   Office of the Inspector General in Florida

PAI   Program Access Index

PACMIS   Public Assistance Case Management Information System in Utah

PCG   Public Consulting Group, an independent business in Massachusetts

PDF   portable document format

POS   point of sale

QA   quality assurance

QM   quality management

QMS   Quality Management System in Florida

RAMP   Rapid Application for Medical Programs in Florida

RAP   Refugee Assistance Program in Florida

RCS   Reported Changes System in Florida

SDR   Service Delivery Redesign in Washington

SDX   State Data Exchange in Washington

SNAP   Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

SNAP QC   SNAP quality control data

SOP	standard of promptness in Georgia
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
SSN	Social Security number
SUCCESS	System for the Uniform Calculation and Consolidation of Economic Support in Georgia
SUNCAP	Combined Application Project in Florida
TAFDC	Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TAO	Transitional Assistance Office in Massachusetts
TCOS	TANF Community Outreach Services in Georgia
TEFAP	The Emergency Food Assistance Program in Washington
UI	Unemployment Insurance
UMMS	University of Massachusetts Medical School
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USR	Universal Semiannual Reporting
VG	Virtual Gateway, the online SNAP application in Massachusetts
VOIP	voice over internet provider
WASHCAP	Washington Combined Application Project
WAU	Web Application Unit in Massachusetts
WDD	Workforce Development Division in Utah
WIC	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a critical source of support for many low-income families. Because eligibility for program benefits is linked to income, participation in the program tends to be higher in hard economic times. This has proven particularly true in recent years. From 2000 to 2011, average monthly participation in SNAP rose from 17.2 million to 44.7 million people, an increase of almost 160 percent.[1]

Although difficult economic times lead to increased caseloads, they also lead to smaller state budgets. Under federal law, states are required to pay 50 percent of the costs for administering SNAP. Thus, in recent years states have incurred higher administrative costs while facing increasingly constrained budgets.

In response to these trends, states have sought to reduce administrative costs while maintaining or increasing access to SNAP and other programs, among those eligible. The changes states have made are commonly referred to as *modernization*. Although modernization means different things in different states, it typically refers to steps that state SNAP agencies take to streamline intake and eligibility determination. Modernization can include changes to how clients apply for benefits, are interviewed, and report changes to their circumstances over time. It can also include changes to less visible operations, such as allocation of work across agency staff, income verification methods, and supporting documentation storage practices. In general, modernization activities fall into four categories:[2]

1. **Restructuring of administrative functions** to improve operational efficiency. This category includes specialization of staff roles, exemplified by shifting from the caseworker model to a process model, and centralization of staff, such as creating a statewide call center to perform certain functions.

2. **Expanding uses of technology** to improve efficiency or client access. Technology enhancements can be developed for client use, such as online applications and accounts, or for SNAP staff, such as workload management tools. Document imaging and electronic case records are other examples.

3. **Partnering with other organizations** to improve access or assist clients. This category includes creating formal networks of community partners and providing various types of supports to partner organizations.

4. **Simplifying policy** to improve efficiency or access. Common policy simplifications include waivers of face-to-face interviews, reductions in the number and types of verification documentation is required, expansions of categorical eligibility, and lengthened certification periods.

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[1] SNAP Participation and Costs. Data as of May 31, 2012, available at [http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/SNAPsummary.htm].

[2] Cody et al. (2008), Rowe et al. (2010), and Castner et al. (2012) all consider the same activities to be modernization. This study consolidates these activities into the same four categories of activities used in both Rowe et al. (2010) and Castner et al. (2012).

Modernization decisions are influenced by a variety of factors. The 2008 recession triggered a growing need for assistance among households across the country, increasing SNAP caseloads, and at the same time put pressure on state agency budgets. All states are also subject to federal performance incentives and penalties for access, timeliness, and error rates. Other key contextual factors vary by state. The priorities of state legislatures and the influences of other stakeholders, such as labor unions, can play important roles in defining modernization approaches.

In 2009, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) commissioned Mathematica Policy Research to conduct in-depth case studies examining selected states' SNAP-related modernization efforts. The goals of this study include developing a detailed understanding of the changes made and investigating whether state measures of program efficiency, access, and integrity have changed since states implemented their modernization initiatives.

This report presents a comprehensive picture of each state's experiences with modernization, assesses the potential impacts, and identifies key lessons learned. The data collected span from July 2000 to February 2012. Changes occurring after that time period are not presented. The findings can help policymakers and program administrators at the national and state levels understand the implications of modernization changes and identify effective strategies and practices when replicating these efforts, while avoiding implementation pitfalls.

A. Study Overview

1.   Research Objectives, Methods, and Limitations

FNS commissioned the in-depth case studies of modernization to examine the experiences of the selected states and explore the potential effects that modernization initiatives have on key program goals of efficiency, access, and integrity. This report addresses several objectives, including developing profiles of each state to document its modernization efforts; describing changes in certification, recertification, and case management functions, and in the roles and responsibilities of state and local SNAP staff and partners; and documenting the relationship between modernization and the satisfaction of clients, staff, and other stakeholders. It also describes the current performance of each state's modernization initiatives and the level of outcome variability within each state, comparing pre-, current-, and post-modernization performance. Finally, the report documents the main take-away points for use by other states and for future study consideration.

The five states participating in this study were selected intentionally to ensure that the study examined a broad range of modernization changes that had been in operation for several years. The states selected through this process—Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, Utah, and Washington—represent four FNS geographic regions and include a mixture of sizes, in terms of geography, population, and SNAP participation levels. The set of states also covers some variation in the number and maturity of initiatives they implemented; however, because we intentionally selected states with several modernization initiatives in place, the variation among study states is not as great as the variation nationwide.

Primary data collection for the study included in-person interviews and on-site observations and collection of extant data from each state. These data sources were central to the analysis presented in this report.

- **Site visits.** We conducted two rounds of site visits to each of the five states. During the visits, we interviewed SNAP agency staff from all levels, community partners involved in

outreach and application assistance, and other relevant program stakeholders. We also conducted four focus groups in each state, two with SNAP participants and two with eligible nonparticipants. Finally, we toured local offices and other units and observed SNAP operations. The total number of interviews and focus groups ranged from 33 in Massachusetts and Utah to 42 in Florida; the total number of respondents ranged from 73 in Massachusetts to 149 in Florida.

- **Extant data.** We collected extant data from each of the study states, including monthly administrative case records and application statistics for a period of approximately 10 years. States also provided performance data and other relevant materials about their modernization efforts. In addition to information from states, we collected SNAP quality control (QC) data and annual administrative cost data from FNS.

Readers should consider several important limitations when interpreting and extrapolating the study findings. The study was descriptive in nature and focused on a specific time window in a particular subset of states. Notably, the study lacks representation of county-administered states, and our information about the implementation of modernization is based primarily on interviews with current (as of the time of the study) SNAP and partner staff. This set of individuals did not necessarily include all those involved at the time key modernization decisions were made. Another limitation is that the study design lacks the causal validity to draw conclusions regarding the effects of modernization on any outcomes. In addition, the study does not include a cost-benefit analysis, although we provide descriptive information on costs and benefits.

2. Key Findings Across States

a. Similarities and Differences in States' Implementation of Common Modernization Activities

Each case study state implemented modernization initiatives in four categories: (1) restructuring of administrative functions, (2) expanding uses of technology, (3) simplifying policy, and (4) partnering with other organizations. Table 1 summarizes some of the most common activities across the five case study states.

b. Restructuring of Administrative Functions

All five states made changes to their administrative staffing structures as part of their modernization efforts. These changes typically included centralizing some administrative functions at the state or regional level and increasing the specialization of staff in local offices. Centralization

Table 1. Key Modernization Changes in Study States

Modernization Initiatives	Florida	Georgia	Massachusetts	Utah	Washington
Call Center	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Specialization of Local Office Staff by Task	✓	✓	✓		✓
Telecommuting	✓	✓[b]		✓	
Online Application	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Online Accounts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Online Recertification	✓	✓		✓	✓
Document Imaging/Electronic Case Files	✓	pilot		✓	✓
Waiver of Face-to-Face Interviews (at application and recertification)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eligibility Simplifications[a]	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reduced Verification Requirements	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simplified Reporting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Formal Community Partnership Networks	✓	✓	✓		✓

[a] Including broad-based categorical eligibility, Combined Application Projects (CAPs), exclusions of certain types of income or assets, standard deductions, and removal of certain conditions on eligibility.

[b] In Georgia, only call center staff telecommute.

of specific tasks was designed to improve efficiency and reduce the workload of local office staff, freeing them to conduct core eligibility and case management activities. Specialization of staff also aimed to improve efficiency by enabling staff to focus on a more limited set of tasks, thus building their expertise—and speed—in that particular area over time. However, each case study state developed organizational structures tailored to its specific context and goals.

Centralization. The most common form of centralization was the establishment of a call center reachable through a single toll-free telephone number. All five study states established some sort of statewide call center, but the core purpose and roles of call center staff varied considerably by state, as shown in Table 2. At one extreme is Utah, which centralized operations such that all SNAP eligibility staff in the state are now call agents.[3] At the opposite extreme is Massachusetts, where call agents are not authorized eligibility workers, so their role is limited to answering basic questions. In the other three study states, call center staff focus on processing changes based on information received between certification dates—from clients (by telephone or online) or through data exchanges. In all states, call agents can answer case-specific questions and, with the exception of Massachusetts, are able to resolve most issues that callers have about SNAP or their specific application or case.

Many of the states we examined also used call centers to centralize other tasks as well. Some of these were natural expansions—such as processing changes submitted online as well as those reported by telephone—whereas others were less related to telephone calls. For example, staff in Georgia's call center are responsible for registering online applications. In Washington, the centralized document imaging unit is located in the same building and overseen by the same administrator as the call center.

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[3] Local offices are now employment centers, and the staff remaining there can provide basic assistance in completing an application.

Table 2. Call Center Functions Across Study States

Call Center Functions	Florida	Georgia	Massachusetts	Utah	Washington
Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Functions					
Provide general information	✓	n.a.	n.a.	✓	✓
Provide account-specific information	✓	n.a.	n.a.	✓	✓
Direct clients to the appropriate queues	✓	n.a.	n.a.	✓	
Staff Functions					
Answer general questions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Provide account information	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Conduct initial interviews	s			✓	s
Conduct recertification interviews	s			✓	s
Process changes submitted by callers	✓	✓		✓	✓
Process change submitted online	✓	✓		✓	

s = secondary functions.

n.a. = not applicable. (Call centers in Georgia and Massachusetts do not have IVRs, although Massachusetts has a separate IVR not connected to its call center.)

Beside call centers, some states established other statewide units to perform centralized functions. For example, Massachusetts developed two regional units to process online applications. In Washington and some areas of Utah, document imaging is conducted in centralized locations. Regionally centralized teams also conduct recertification activities in Washington.

Centralized units were not necessarily physically centralized. Most states' call centers have multiple locations, and agents can telecommute in some states. For example, with Utah's centralization of staff into a virtual call center, eligibility workers are now physically based in one of four physical call centers, in work spaces in some local employment offices, or telecommute from home. Florida adopted telecommuting among eligibility workers—not call center staff—as a way to reduce office space costs and, at least initially, it was seen as a reward for the most productive workers. As the practice has expanded, however, and is now mandatory in some locations in Florida, staff reactions are mixed. Utah is no longer expanding telecommuting, in part because of the expense and complexity of providing technology support to staff in their homes.

Specialization within local offices. In four of the case study states (all but Utah, where all eligibility staff are now centralized), modernization also brought an increase in specialization of staff functions within local offices. Although specific changes varied by state, the general shift was away from the traditional caseworker model—in which a single worker owns a case from application for as long as the household remains on SNAP—to a process model, in which different staff focus on different tasks in the certification and case management process. In some states, the degree of specialization and the specific division of tasks varied across offices.

The most common type of specialization of tasks in local offices was a division between intake (processing initial applications) and ongoing cases. Staff in at least some offices in most case study states specialized in this way. Other examples of task divisions included specializing in online applications or paper applications, or specializing in interviews or other eligibility determination activities. In some locations, the staff person who first touches an application will complete the certification process if he or she can, but if not—for example, if the staff member cannot reach the client for a telephone interview or has not received a necessary verification document—then the case moves to another worker for the next step in the process.

Although the specific tasks that are centralized or specialized vary by state, staff in all study states found that the increased specialization increased efficiency, allowing fewer staff to handle growing caseloads. Call centers and other centralized units relieve local office of responsibility for certain tasks—such as processing changes or imaging documents—so that they can focus on other eligibility and case management activities. Whether centralized or distributed among local offices, focusing on a particular task allows specialized staff to build expertise in that area, which may enable them to perform better and faster over time.

c.   Expanding Uses of Technology

The most common technological enhancement among the study states was the development of online tools for client access. In all five states, households can submit applications for SNAP benefits online and create accounts to check their case from any device with an Internet connection. In four of the five states, clients can also report changes to their household circumstances and recertify online. Table 3 summarizes the online functions available across states. In addition to providing options that many clients find convenient, online applications and accounts can ease the burden on staff. Data entered into online applications feed directly into eligibility systems in some states, reducing the time staff spend on data entry. Online accounts allow clients to obtain information about their case and even report changes without requiring the attention of staff.

Table 3. Online Application and Account Functions Across Study States

	Florida	Georgia	Massachusetts	Utah	Washington
Online Eligibility Screening Tool	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Online Application	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Online Accounts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Report Changes Online	✓	✓		✓	✓
Upload Documents	✓	pilot			
Recertify Online	✓	✓		✓	✓
Email Notification of Account Changes or New Notices Available	✓			✓	

Interactive voice response (IVR) systems enabled clients to complete some tasks by telephone without speaking to an agent. Massachusetts has a stand-alone IVR system accessible through a toll-free number that provides basic information about the program and the client's application (for recent applicants) or case (for active clients). In three other states, IVRs are part of the call center, as shown in Table 2.

Other common technological enhancements made it easier for staff to do their jobs. In all case study states, at least some data entered by clients into online applications fed automatically into the eligibility system. New or updated computer systems or software tools used by staff range from user-friendly interfaces in Florida and sortable task lists aligned with the new process-based staffing structure in Washington to new rules-based eligibility systems in Massachusetts and Utah. Some have also developed back-end tools that link different systems (such as eligibility, application, and data verification) or that help staff manage workloads. For example, one module developed for Florida's management system automatically assigns work to staff across offices, whereas some office managers in Georgia—which had restructured staff more recently—struggled without such tools.

Two closely related but somewhat less common initiatives that were seen as critical in some states are document imaging and electronic case records. Utah considered electronic case records an essential precursor to its centralized restructuring—so much so that the state delayed administrative

restructuring until electronic records were in place. Georgia was piloting document imaging at the time of the data collection, and staff eagerly awaited the expected roll-out. Portability of case records is necessary for work sharing and equalization of case loads across locations, which was a key goal for some states.

d. Policy Simplifications

All study states implemented a variety of policy simplifications designed to reduce barriers to access, burden on staff, and error rates. One key policy change adopted by all five states was obtaining a waiver of the face-to-face interview requirement. This change meant that clients no longer had to come to an office for an interview at either initial application or recertification, but instead could complete their interview by telephone. Widespread use of telephone interviews facilitated administrative restructuring, and the resulting efficiencies, because interviewers no longer must be located in local offices close to applicants. Reducing the number of local offices or shifting all eligibility workers to a virtual call center as Utah did, would have been more difficult—if not impossible—without telephone interviews and other tools that reduce the necessity for in-person contact between clients and SNAP staff.

The process by which clients and staff connect for telephone interviews differed by state, however. In Utah, most clients called in for their interviews, whereas in the remaining states, eligibility staff typically called clients, at least initially. In Washington, clients contacted the call center, were placed into a telephone interview queue, and received a call back from an eligibility worker within two hours. Each method has drawbacks: staff often found that clients were not at home or telephone numbers had been disconnected; clients often had long waits to reach busy staff or had trouble getting through on a limited number of telephone lines. However, before telephone interviews were an option, missed appointments and long waits in offices were challenges.

Other policy changes simplified eligibility requirements, including expanding categorical eligibility (increasing the number of households eligible for SNAP based on eligibility for or receipt of benefits from other specified low-income assistance programs), excluding certain types of income or assets, using standard deductions, and reducing the verification requirements. The specifics of the policy changes varied considerably by state, but taken together, these types of simplifications eased the eligibility process for both clients and staff. One notable example, initiated in three of the five study states was creating a Combined Application Project (CAP) with the Social Security Administration (SSA), which streamlines the eligibility process for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients. The number of new cases entering the SNAP rolls through Massachusetts' CAP was large enough to create spikes in program entrants in specific months.

After a client had enrolled in SNAP, simplified reporting policies reduced the types of changes in circumstances that clients had to report during their certification periods in all five states, and some also lengthened the certification period. These policy changes eased the burden on clients and staff throughout the case's life cycle.

e. Partnering with Community Organizations

Four of the five case study states (all but Utah) created formal networks of community partners. Partner organizations commonly provide outreach and information about SNAP, assist in the application process, and answer clients' questions to the best of their ability. Besides improving access for populations and individuals who may not easily access benefits on their own, knowledgeable partners can reduce burden on SNAP staff by assisting clients. Partner roles were

generally similar across states—and the roles of formal partners did not differ greatly from those of other community organizations without formal arrangements with the state agency. One notable exception was a pilot project in Florida, which expanded the role of select partners (seven, as of 2012) to include conducting interviews. As of early 2012, the size of the partnership networks in the case study states ranged from 26 in Georgia (which had just completed its pilot phase and planned to expand) to more than 3,000 in Florida.

In most case study states, the key change under modernization was the variety of supports that states provided to their partners, rather than the roles community organizations played. Supports ranged from monetary or in-kind compensation to training and information. All four states with formal partnership networks provided some level of financial support—typically federal funding passed through the state agency—to at least some partners, but the number of compensated partners and the basis of compensation varied. In most states, reimbursements covered a specific portion (around 50 percent) of the costs incurred in educating clients about SNAP. In Washington, however, compensation shifted from a cost reimbursement model to a performance-based model, under which the fees paid to community organizations were based on numbers of applications submitted and approved.

State SNAP agencies also provided training and information to help community organizations better serve their shared clients. In Florida, each circuit had at least one full-time staff person designated to serve as community partner liaison, a role that includes recruitment, training, monitoring, and answering partners' questions about SNAP in general or even specific clients' cases. Washington assigned partners to a regional community partner coordinator, who served as the organization's main point of contact with the agency. Georgia had a single statewide staff person who provided support directly to umbrella partners, which in turn supported their subsidiary partners. Because assisting clients in completing the online application was a key role for many partners, it was a focus of training in some states—Massachusetts provided training to partners on its online system, and Utah—despite lacking a formal partnership structure—has trained community organization staff on third-party access to online accounts. Authorized partners in most study states could view the application status (and, in some states, benefit information) for clients they assist; Washington is considering granting outreach partners more access to client information.

3.   Pervasiveness of Changes, from the Client's Perspective

Modernization has increased the number of self-service options available to clients in all case study states. Some changes have also resulted in less personal attention, particularly in-person interaction between staff and clients. New options, such as online applications, have reduced the need for clients to come to SNAP offices. In four of the five case study states (Massachusetts is the exception), more than half of all SNAP applications are submitted online. Clients can also check their account, report changes, and recertify online. Interviews by telephone are even more pervasive in most states, though less so in Massachusetts. Still, paper applications and in-person interviews are available, at least upon request.

Some other changes were less optional for clients. In Florida, Georgia, and Washington, clients no longer had an assigned caseworker who followed their case through the SNAP lifecycle. Even in the other two states, where each worker owned specific cases, clients were likely to interact with others at some points. In Massachusetts, staff in some offices were divided between intake and ongoing cases, so the person who processed the application passed the case along to a different worker for recertification—although that worker then kept the case through all subsequent

recertifications. In Utah, a client's call might be answered by any member of the client's caseworker's team.

Shorter interviews and less frequent interviews also resulted in less time interacting with a caseworker. Interviews occurred less frequently in some states than before modernization due to policy changes that lengthened certification periods and/or required interviews to be conducted only at alternate certifications. Although many clients found such changes convenient, others missed the greater degree of personal attention.

In some places, there is no longer a nearby office location for clients to seek SNAP staff. Florida closed more than half of its local offices during the period from 2004 to 2012, and Washington closed almost 20 percent of local offices from 2001 to 2012, to consolidate operations and save on facilities costs. In Utah, no eligibility staff remain in local offices.

Reaching SNAP staff by telephone is also more difficult now. As discussed in greater detail later, limited numbers of lines at both call centers and local offices resulted in frequent busy signals, and even those calls that got through can have long hold times.

Florida

Modernization in Florida began after a 2003 state legislative mandate to reduce administrative costs and staffing levels. Caseload growth of 183 percent between 2004 and 2011 and federal incentives to reduce error rates provided additional motivation for continued modernization. In streamlining program delivery, the state focused on four goals: (1) reducing administrative costs, (2) decreasing staff burden, (3) reducing payment errors, and (4) expanding program access.

Key Modernization Initiatives

Restructuring of administrative functions. Staff functions were specialized and centralized in a shift away from the traditional caseworker model. Under the new structure, statewide call centers answered questions and processed client-reported changes, and region-wide case maintenance units handled system-generated changes. Local office staff focused on intake and recertification, with eligibility workers typically specializing in either interviewing or processing information to determine eligibility. To encourage clients to self-serve, early modernization efforts also included redesigning office lobbies, equipped with computers for accessing online applications and accounts; photocopy, fax, and scanning equipment for submitting verification documents; and telephones for reaching the call center. From 2004 to 2011, the state reduced staff levels by 41 percent and closed more than half of its local offices. Telecommuting became common among eligibility staff.

Expanding uses of technology. Florida expanded technology systems used by both clients and staff. To facilitate access and encourage self-service, the state launched an online application and later created online accounts. The functionality of online accounts expanded gradually to allow change reporting, recertification, notifications, and documentation uploading, in addition to providing account information. Enhanced technological tools developed for staff included a document imaging system to support paperless client files, two key workflow management tools that supported the shift to a process model, and a Quality Management System to facilitate reviews of eligibility determinations.

Partnering with community organizations. The state developed an extensive community partner network. Community liaisons recruited new partners, provided training and technical assistance, and monitored partner organizations. As of early 2012, a total of 3,344 partners were enrolled. The majority of partners in the network had staff available to provide assistance in the SNAP application process. Other partners provided clients access to self-service equipment, including computers, fax and photocopy machines, and telephones. In addition, seven partners participated in a pilot project under an FNS waiver permitting selected nonstate employees to conduct face-to-face interviews, with training and monitoring from SNAP staff.

Policy simplifications. Simplified policies streamlined SNAP processes. A waiver of face-to-face interviews permitted interviews to be conducted by telephone. In addition, most interviews were shortened from about one hour to approximately ten minutes. The state also implemented a variety of changes to eligibility and documentation requirements, including adopting broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE), excluding certain types of income and assets, and introducing a CAP that enrolls SSI recipients for SNAP without requiring a separate application.

Measures of Performance

Outcomes following modernization were generally positive. SNAP applications and participation climbed, with the number of households enrolled quadrupling from 2000 to 2011 (although this increase reflected growth in the number of people eligible for SNAP as well as increases in program accessibility). Clients frequently used new points of access to benefits; most notably, approximately 90 percent of applications in 2011 were submitted online. Clients reported that they were generally satisfied with the modernized system of benefit delivery, although challenges related to accessing assistance from staff in times of high demand remain. The state also experienced improved outcomes in terms of both payment errors and administrative costs. Cost reductions were due in part to staff reductions and office closures. Remaining staff generally viewed modernization as necessary for managing caseload growth within limited resources.

Georgia

Efforts to modernize SNAP administration in Georgia have evolved incrementally, with most reforms occurring over the past few years. One of the state's core modernization goals, to reduce and evenly distribute staff burden, was motivated largely by caseload growth that occurred with the recession, concurrent with staff reductions caused by a hiring freeze. Nearly being placed under FNS sanction for high payment error rates in 2007 prompted the goal to improve errors. In addition, Georgia sought to increase program access.

Key Modernization Initiatives

Restructuring of administrative functions. Creating a single statewide call center—with responsibility for answering client questions, processing changes, and registering online applications—was among the earliest modernization initiatives in Georgia. More recently, the state shifted away from the traditional caseworker model to a process-based model in which each worker specializes in a particular eligibility task, such as processing initial applications. At the same time, the state began centralizing operations across county offices within each region.

Expanding uses of technology. Georgia's technological advances have focused on creating and enhancing online access for clients. Applicants can use online tools to screen for benefits, submit an application, and check the status of their online applications. SNAP recipients can create online accounts, from which they can check their benefits, report changes to their household circumstances, and recertify. More recently, the state began making additional significant investments in technology for SNAP workers, piloting a document imaging system to facilitate caseload sharing across offices. Enhanced workflow management tools and reports were still in development during the study period.

Partnering with community organizations. Georgia's efforts to build a formal, statewide network of partners were also in progress. A pilot was initiated in 2011 with two umbrella organizations overseeing 16 additional registered partners. Umbrella organizations train, support, and monitor other partners, to minimize the oversight burden on state staff. At least initially, umbrella organizations are community organizations that have existing relationships with the SNAP agency—such as SNAP outreach grantees. A single full-time coordinator was appointed in spring 2012 to work with umbrella organizations and expand the network statewide.

Policy simplifications. The state instituted several policy simplifications aimed at reducing errors and burden. Simplifications to eligibility and reporting rules included implementing BBCE, reducing verification requirements, and simplifying reporting requirements. The state received waivers from FNS that allowed clients to interview by telephone and postponed interviews for expedited cases until after eligibility determinations. Initial eligibility interviews were shortened for clients who applied online and for all recertification interviews, due to more comprehensive information collected in the online application and expanded recertification forms. In addition, Georgia reduced the frequency of all recertification interviews to once per year.

Measures of Performance

Over the past decade, several outcomes in Georgia have changed, although many key initiatives coincided with the national recession, making it difficult to disentangle the effects of modernization. The state experienced strong participation growth and improvements in client access. The SNAP caseload more than doubled from 2007 to 2011. Application approval rates overall changed little between 2010 and 2011, but were slightly lower for online applicants, which comprised approximately two-thirds of all applications in late 2011. Both payment errors and administrative costs per case decreased during the study period. Clients were generally satisfied with the modernization changes, although some reported challenges accessing staff by telephone. Staff facing an increased workload reported that modernization changes were helpful in general, but that some modifications and additional planning would be beneficial.

Massachusetts

The primary goal of modernization efforts in Massachusetts has been to increase program access, driven largely by the low rates of program participation among eligible households during the early 2000s, relative to other states. A secondary goal to improve the efficiency of the program took on increasing importance as the state's SNAP caseload increased dramatically. Modernization choices were also influenced by several active stakeholders, including the state legislature, food and nutrition advocacy groups, legal advocacy groups, and a strong, active union representing eligibility workers.

Key Modernization Initiatives

Restructuring of administrative functions. Administrative restructuring began on a limited scale in Massachusetts. A local initiative that specialized the roles of different staff in two offices—by separating intake and ongoing case management activities—expanded to slightly more than half of all local offices in the state. Massachusetts has also outstationed some eligibility workers. The functions of the statewide call center were limited to providing information, because call center staff are not authorized eligibility workers. Processing of online applications was centralized in some parts of the state through the creation of two regional web application units.

Expanding uses of technology. The most visible technological innovation was an online application. The Provider View component was developed first and allowed authorized community partners to assist clients in completing an online application and to view the status of such applications. The newer Consumer View allowed individuals to screen for eligibility and apply online, and the most recent module lets clients create accounts to view information about their case online. Massachusetts also upgraded its rules-based eligibility system to a more user-friendly, web-based version, which includes a new series of reports that assist staff with workflow management.

Partnering with community organizations. Developing strong partnerships with community organizations and sister agencies to improve outreach was a key focus of modernization in Massachusetts. The SNAP agency sought to capitalize on existing relationships organizations—particularly those that target underserved populations, such as the elderly, individuals with disabilities, noncitizens, or Hispanic/Latino populations—had within the community to educate potential beneficiaries and assist them in applying for SNAP. The state provided training to prepare community-based organizations (CBOs) to serve SNAP clients, and formal partners had access to the Provider View of the online application. For a growing set of outreach partners (14 in 2012), the agency also provided partial reimbursement of costs incurred in providing outreach and application assistance.

Policy simplifications. A second key focus of the state's effort to increase access was pursuing policy options to reduce barriers and burden on potential clients, particularly underserved populations. Early policy changes included shortening the application from 16 pages to 4 and instituting simplified reporting. Later, Massachusetts obtained a waiver of face-to-face interviews, implemented BBCE, instituted standardized deductions for medical expenses, and streamlined verification requirements. Certification periods were maximized to two years for elderly and disabled clients and one year for all other households. To reduce the burden elderly and disabled clients, the state obtained a waiver from FNS to eliminate the recertification interview requirement for elderly and disabled households with no earned income, implemented a CAP, and reduced the application to two pages for elderly clients.

Measures of Performance

During the period of modernization changes from 2003 to 2011, Massachusetts experienced increasing applications and caseloads, but disentangling these trends from the effects of the recession is difficult. Application processing time and timeliness suffered when staffing did not increase at the same rate as caseloads. Despite the availability of an online application and partner assistance, most clients applied in person because they could get their benefits faster that way. Administrative costs per case fell, even as the number of eligibility workers increased. Error rates also declined, but the sharpest decline occurred before the state's modernization efforts started.

Utah

Utah's primary goals in modernizing its SNAP operations were to increase program efficiency and increase ease of access for clients. Due to Utah's large rural areas, physical access to local offices varies widely across the state, motivating the need for alternative access points. Efforts to increase efficiency took on added urgency during the economic downturn beginning in 2008, as caseloads increased sharply and the state mandated cuts to the department's budget, leaving the department with less money to process more applications.

Key Modernization Initiatives

Restructuring of administrative functions. A 2009 reorganization of the agency responsible for SNAP consolidated eligibility operations from five regions into a single statewide system operated as a unified, virtual call center. Although workers are still physically dispersed—based in one of four physical call center locations, in work spaces in some local employment offices or telecommuting from home—this centralization standardized procedures statewide and equalized both the number of cases per worker and customer service for clients. All eligibility functions are now handled through the virtual call center, and the agency's local employment centers have banks of computers that connect to the online application and staff who can provide basic assistance in completing it.

Expanding uses of technology. The state introduced document imaging in 1999, which paved the way for electronic case records and the portability of eligibility work. In 2008 Utah rolled out its statewide online application, enabling clients to apply for benefits from any computer with an Internet connection. Online tools for clients expanded to include an online screening tool, client account information, online chat with eligibility workers, electronic correspondence, and change-reporting functionality. In addition, the state replaced its legacy mainframe system with a modern, web-based, eligibility system, which was later enhanced with a workload prioritization feature. The new eligibility system is linked to both the online application and a data verification system.

Partnering with community organizations. Links to community partner organizations remain informal, but the state planned to develop stronger, more formal relationships with community partners to increase outreach to eligible households not participating in SNAP. In 2012, the SNAP agency introduced third-party access to the online system, which made it possible for community organizations and other client advocates to apply for benefits on behalf of clients and, depending on the level of authorization designated by a client, view details of the client's account, report changes, or complete the online recertification form. The state provided training to some community organizations on the online system.

Policy simplifications. To facilitate the transition to the statewide virtual call center model, Utah obtained waivers from FNS to allow initial and recertification interviews to be conducted over the telephone for all clients and to waive interview scheduling requirements. Other policy changes include simplified reporting and a break-in-service policy, under which clients whose eligibility has lapsed for fewer than 30 days can be reinstated without submitting a new application. FNS also approved a waiver providing clients the option of receiving only electronic notices, rather than notices through the mail.

Measures of Performance

During the period of Utah's comprehensive administrative and technological changes, outcome measures were generally positive. Costs dropped sharply when accounting for the caseload increases of 240 percent from July 2000 to December 2011. Payment error rates, a particular problem for Utah at the beginning of the study period, fell sharply and remained at or below the national average for the rest of the decade. Application processing timeliness was temporarily disrupted during the period of Utah's most significant technological and administrative changes, which also occurred during the height of the economic downturn of 2008 and 2009, but quickly returned to normal levels. Clients and staff had generally positive opinions of the changes in Utah during the study period.

Washington

Three key goals motivated Washington's SNAP modernization process: (1) to reform eligibility operations in preparation for the expected influx of cases following the 2008 economic downturn; (2) to decrease eligibility determination times, improve customer service, and reduce costs; and (3) to standardize operations across the state for both staff and clients. The economic downturn created conditions that made increasing the efficiency of eligibility operations imperative: caseloads rose rapidly, substantially increasing the department's workload even as state budget pressures resulted in a staff hiring freeze and office closures.

Key Modernization Initiatives

Restructuring of administrative functions. Washington shifted away from the traditional caseworker model to a process-based model. Responsibility for processing changes and answering client questions was consolidated into a single statewide virtual call center, most recertification reviews were assigned to three regional teams, and document imaging was centralized at five hubs. Within local offices, staff teams rotate through a set of eligibility-determination tasks following standardized processes, including providing same-day service for clients who apply in person by 2:00 p.m. with all necessary verification documents. Responsibility for backlog work is shared by all staff across the state. The state also established two mobile offices that travel to remote locations.

Expanding uses of technology. The portability of work was facilitated by centralized document imaging, electronic case records, and a statewide workload management system. A single system houses imaged documents (in clients' electronic case records) and contains workload management tools to assign work and monitor productivity. For clients, the state offered an online application and screening tool, and accounts that enable clients to check application status or benefit information, report changes, and recertify from any computer with Internet access.

Partnering with community organizations. The state developed a network of community partners to provide outreach and application assistance. All partners provided printed information about SNAP, computers clients could use to apply, and answers to basic questions; some also provided more intensive assistance completing the application. Each partner was assigned to a regional community partner coordinator, who served as the organization's main point of contact with the SNAP agency. Some of the partners received compensation, under what has evolved from a cost reimbursement model to a performance-based model, where fees are paid to community organizations based on the numbers of applications submitted and approved.

Policy simplifications. Obtaining a waiver of interview scheduling requirements was key to the introduction of same-day service. Washington implemented policies such as BBCE, simplified reporting, and reduced verification of household composition to reduce barriers for clients and burden on staff. The state also received a waived of face-to-face interviews at initial application and recertification.

Measures of Performance

Washington saw improvements in several outcome measures during the course of modernization. Applications rose over the study period, particularly following the economic downturn, and approval rates remained steady, resulting in an increase in active cases. Despite a quadrupled state caseload, application processing time improved with the introduction of same-day service. By 2011, more than a third of clients who applied in person received their benefits the same day. Faster customer service led to improved client satisfaction. In addition, average monthly costs per case fell, from $28.81 in 2000 to $6.97 in 2011. These improved outcomes were offset by increased staff stress, though it is not clear whether this stemmed from modernization changes or from the vast increases in the state's caseload coinciding with hiring freezes and staffing reductions. The availability of same-day service in local offices dampened client interest in using the online application and other tools from remote locations.

4. Changes in Measures of Performance Across States

a. SNAP Access: Caseloads Grew Across All States

The number of households receiving SNAP benefits has increased in all case study states since they began to modernize their SNAP operations. Most of this increase occurred after the onset of the economic downturn in 2008, likely due to increases in the unemployment and poverty rates. The impact of modernization cannot easily be disentangled from the effects of the recession. However, the rise in caseloads at least suggests that modernization changes did not trigger major disruptions in SNAP access.

The Program Access Index (PAI)—a measure of the proportion of low-income individuals who enroll in SNAP—also increased in all case study states from 2005 to 2010 (Figure 1).[4] Although the PAI also increased nationwide, four of the five study states (all but Georgia) improved their position in FNS's ranking of states based on PAI. Both Utah and Washington were ranked in the top 10 in 2010.

Figure 1. Trends in SNAP Program Access Index Across Study States, 2005–2010
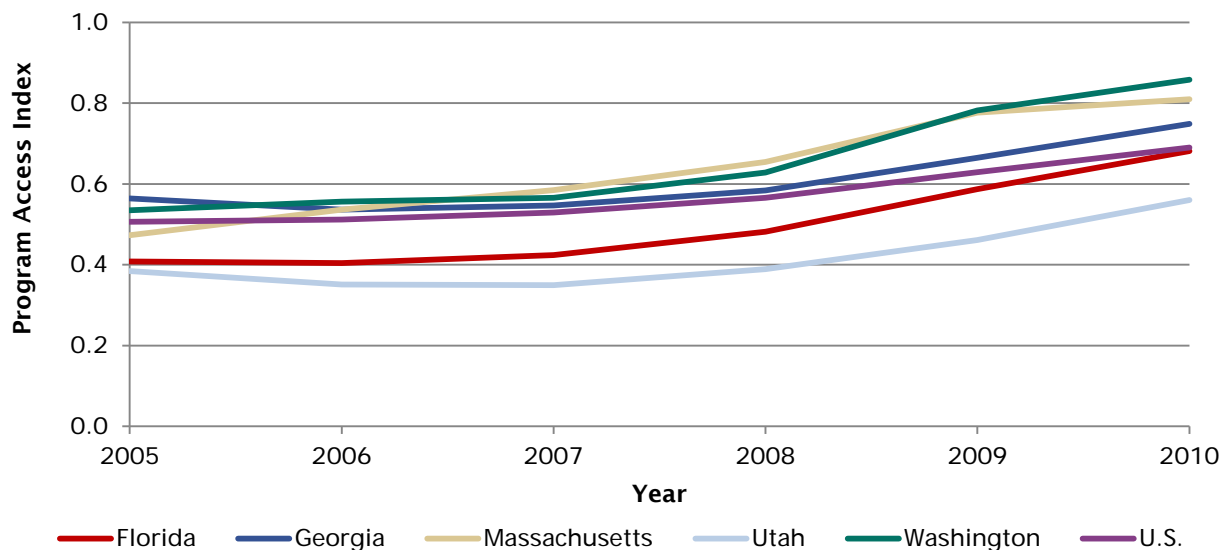
Source: Program Access Index (PAI) data are from the USDA, FNS.

Note: PAI, a measure calculated by FNS, represents a ratio of the average monthly number of SNAP participants over the course of a calendar year to the number of state residents with incomes below 125 percent of the federal poverty level. A higher PAI indicates greater program access.

Despite concerns among some stakeholders that particular vulnerable populations—such as the elderly, disabled, and certain ethnic minority groups—might struggle with the new systems, the study found little evidence of adverse consequences of modernization on the participation of any

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[4] This FNS-computed indicator measures access by dividing the average monthly number of SNAP participants over the course of a calendar year by the number of people in each state with incomes below 125 percent of the federal poverty level.

subgroup of interest. Across states, the demographic characteristics of the SNAP population remained fairly stable throughout the study period. One exception is a decrease in the proportion of recipients ages 60 or older in Florida. Although the number of SNAP heads of household in this age group doubled from 2005 to 2011, caseload growth among younger households was even greater.

Consistent with caseload growth, the number of SNAP applications submitted rose, particularly after 2008. Again, changing economic conditions generally preclude tying the increase in applications to modernization. However, one particular initiative in Massachusetts did cause notable spikes in new SNAP cases in certain months: the first phase of Massachusetts' CAP with SSI approximately tripled the number of new applicants in two months of 2005.

b. Application Timeliness: Processing Time Varied Over Time and by Submission Method

Trends in the amount of time between application submission and eligibility determination were more likely due to patterns in the numbers of applications submitted—and the lack of commensurate changes in the number of staff to process them—rather than any modernization initiative. In one state, however, application processing time seemed to suffer during a period of transition. The percentage of applications processed within the required time frame fell markedly in Utah during the period of most significant technological and administrative changes, which coincided with the sharpest increase in application submissions in that state, before returning to near normal levels (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Average SNAP Application Processing Timeliness Across Study States, 2000–2011
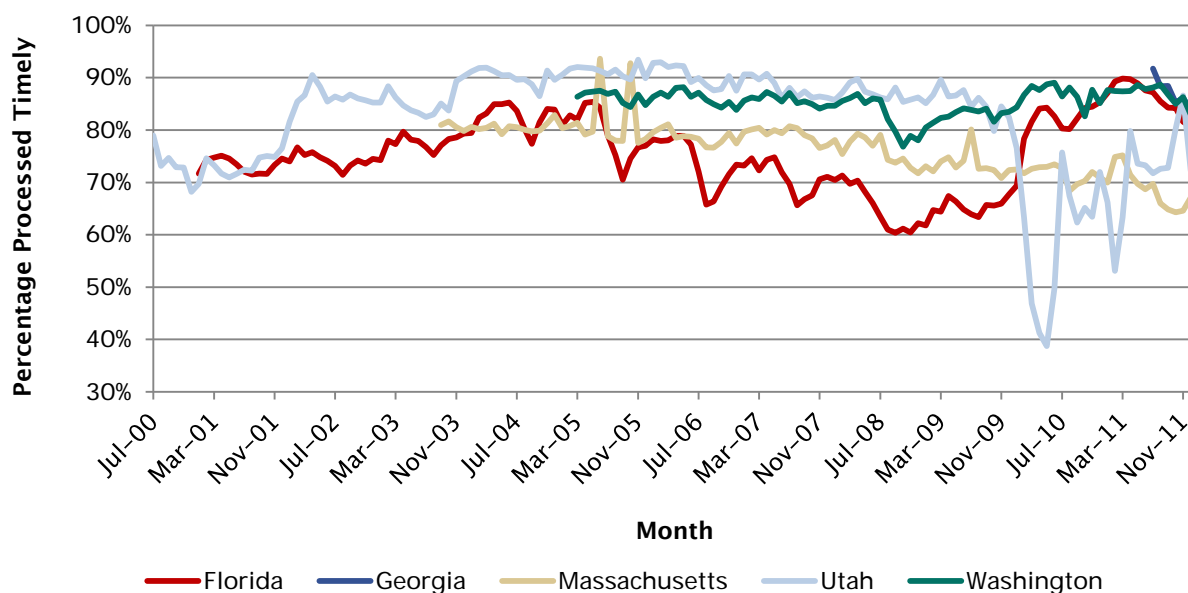
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by state SNAP agencies.

Note: Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and 30 days for all other applications. Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files. The results might differ from the official FNS quality control (QC) measure of timeliness. The application data provided do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications are included in our calculation of timeliness.

In some states, application processing time differed depending on how the application was submitted. In Florida, Georgia and Massachusetts, applications completed online tended to have

longer processing times than those submitted in the traditional way. The difference was particularly stark in Massachusetts, where fewer than half of online applications were processed timely in 2011. In Florida and Georgia, the difference in timeliness between online and paper applications was only three and seven percentage points, respectively, in the same year. Although administrative records data on this topic are not available in the other two case study states, stakeholders interviewed in Washington reported that online applications took longer to process there as well, due in part to the state's efforts to provide same-day service to clients who come to SNAP offices. In Massachusetts, longer processing time was related to the different procedures followed for online applications. When an application is submitted online, staff must often contact the applicant by telephone to confirm key information or request verification documents. These tasks would be addressed at the time of application when a client applies in person in Massachusetts. In addition, state policy required verification of more items, relative to paper applications.

c.   Application Approval Rates: Varied by Submission Method

Although overall application approval rates showed no clear pattern across the five states (Figure 3), approval rates did vary by submission method. Approval rates were lower for applications submitted online in two of the three states for which administrative data on method of application are available, although this was not the case in Florida. The difference is smaller in Georgia (18 percentage points) that in Massachusetts (33 percentage points). The ease of applying online rather than at a SNAP office, along with reduced social stigma, might encourage more people who are not actually eligible to complete an application. In addition, staff noted that some online applicants might not understand the full application process and fail to provide verification or complete their interview before the deadline, resulting in a denial.

Figure 3. Approval Rate of SNAP Applications by Month Across Study States, 2000–2011
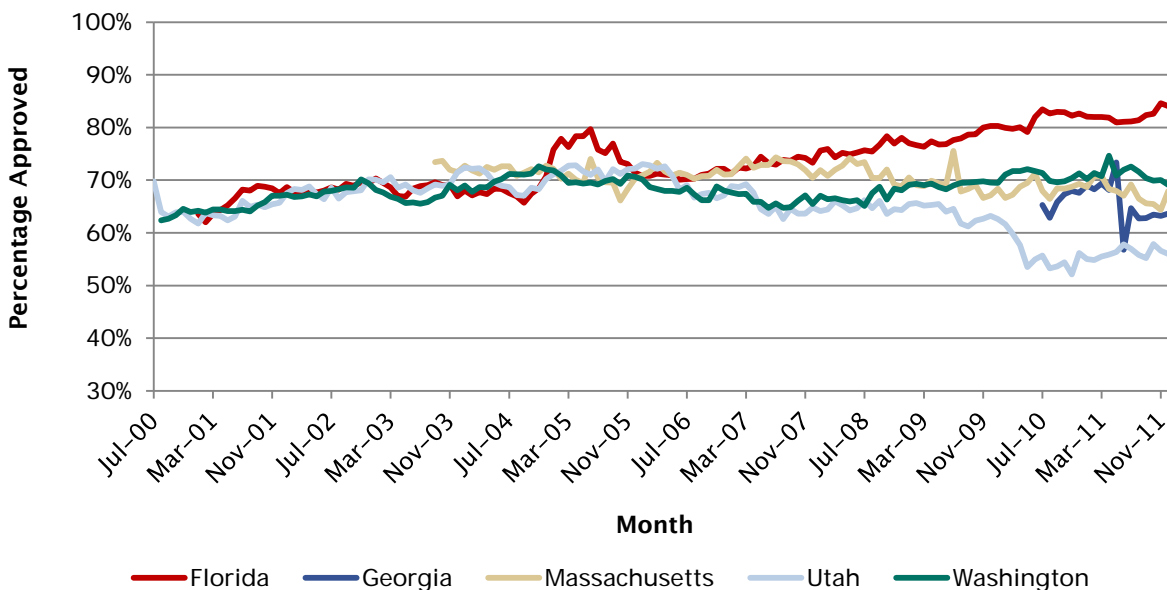
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by state SNAP agencies.

d. Contact Points: New Options, Particularly Online Applications and Call Centers, Utilized by Clients

The modernization process has altered how clients interact with SNAP, by shifting the focus away from local offices as the sole or primary point for obtaining information and assistance. Large and growing numbers of households in the five case study states took advantage of alternative means of accessing services, most commonly online applications and accounts, call centers, and partnership networks.

Online options. Online applications were among the most popular new point of access. By 2011, in four of the five study states, the majority of applications were completed online, rather than in paper form. Although, the method of application was not included in the monthly records data collected from Utah or Washington, staff in Utah reported that virtually all applications were submitted online, either from SNAP offices or other locations. In Washington staff reported that 55 percent of applications were submitted online in early 2012. In Florida, approximately 90 percent of applicants applied online in 2011, up from 76 percent five years earlier.[5] At the opposite end of the range was Massachusetts, where 22 percent of applications were submitted online.

The different rates of online applications correlated to some extent with the degree to which state staff encouraged its use. In Florida, Utah, and Washington, clients who came to a SNAP office in person to apply were typically directed to a computer in the lobby. The lower rate of applying online in Massachusetts was likely also related to the state's different policies and procedures regarding online applications. As noted earlier, state policy and procedures in Massachusetts differed for online applications, resulting in longer processing times relative to paper applications. Focus group respondents in both Massachusetts and Washington noted the differing processing time as key reasons for applying in person, but in Washington, most clients who came to a local office for same-day service actually completed the application at a computer in the lobby. Although stakeholders reported increased utilization of other types of online access, such as clients checking their accounts and reporting changes online, data are not consistently available on the number of households using these options.

Community partners. Although community partners might help reach underserved populations, the available data suggest that only a small minority of applications were submitted directly through community organizations. In 2011, approximately 7 percent of applications submitted in Florida and 4 percent of those in Massachusetts were submitted online at partner locations. In Washington, approximately 2 percent of applications in 2010 were submitted by partners.

However, these are lower-bound estimates of the total numbers of clients assisted by partners for two main reasons. First, paper applications completed with the assistance of partners are not included in the counts for Florida and Massachusetts (because neither state is able to track data on assistance with paper applications). This is particularly an issue in Massachusetts, because, as noted previously, the vast majority of applications were submitted in paper form in that state. Second, in all states, there were other ways that partners could assist beside in submitting applications. For

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[5] The number of online applications discussed here includes applications submitted through the intranet at local offices as well as online applications submitted by community partners.

example, partners could provide outreach to their clients who were unfamiliar with SNAP, equipment to use in copying and faxing verification documents, and assistance in reading and understanding notices received. None of the states in the study was able to count the numbers of clients assisted in these ways, although the numbers of organizations in their partnership networks (totaling over 4,000 across the study states) might be informative.

In addition to the overall numbers served, stakeholders suggested that community partners could be instrumental in reaching particular populations that would not apply for SNAP on their own. These include some new immigrant populations, particularly those with limited English skills and/or low literacy levels, and other groups that might have a general mistrust of government agencies. Partners could also be particularly helpful to other client groups—such as the elderly—that might require more personal attention than is provided under the increasing focus on self-service of some states' modernization initiatives. Clients who do not require special outreach or assistance, however, might consider community organizations to be an unnecessary additional step.

CAPs. CAPs bring large numbers of elderly and disabled SSI recipients to SNAP. In 2011, 7 percent of active cases in Massachusetts and 4 percent in Florida had entered SNAP through the state's CAP. Massachusetts' CAP brought twice as many households to SNAP as all other SNAP applicants combined in two months in 2005, when the program began. (Data are not available on the number of CAP clients in Washington, the other case study state with a CAP.)

Call centers. Call centers were widely used by SNAP clients. Even the limited-function call center in Massachusetts handled up to 10,000 calls per month, and call centers with broader functions in other states can receive more than that in a single day. In Utah, where all eligibility staff are call center staff, call volume averaged more than 5,000 calls per day in 2011. Georgia's call center staff logged more than 3,000 per day, on average, and more than 15,000 reached a call agent in Florida, the most populous state in the study.

Across states, call volume has increased with caseload growth, outpacing capacity. This has resulted in busy signals or dropped calls when the number of callers exceeds the number of available lines (as shown in Figure 4), and sometimes lengthy wait times even for those who get through (as shown in Figure 5). In 2011, less than half of calls to Florida's and Georgia's call centers got through to an agent (although the proportion of calls answered varied across months). Average wait times among callers reaching the call center that year ranged from 6 minutes in Washington to 22 minutes in Georgia. However, those calling during peak hours could encounter substantially higher than average hold times. Although states considered the lengthy wait times a challenge, the fact that clients were willing to wait on hold for so long indicates that it is preferable to traveling to a local SNAP office, which in most states was the only option available before modernization.

Figure 4. Percentage of Calls Answered by Call Center Agents Across Study States, 2004–2011
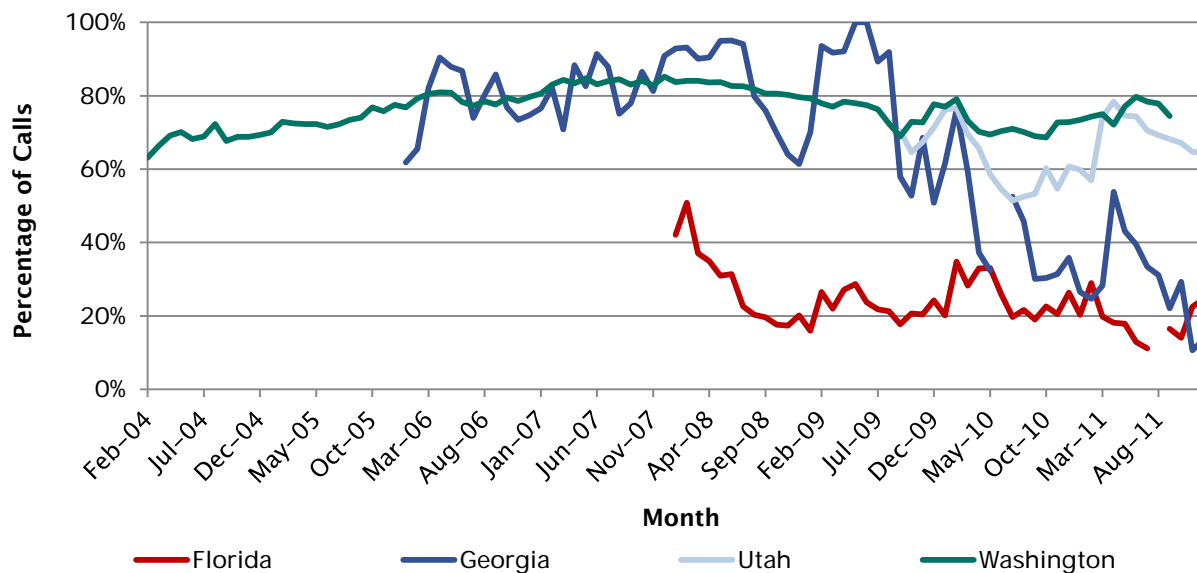
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by state SNAP agencies.

Figure 5. Average Call Center Wait Times Across Study States, 2004–2011
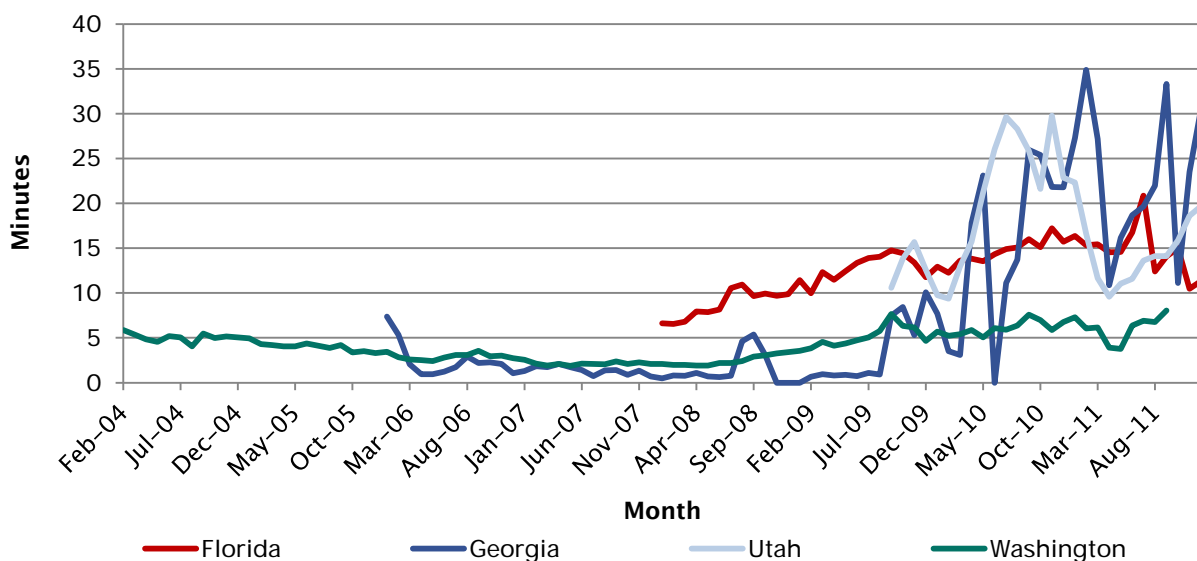
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by state SNAP agencies.

Satisfaction. Clients' satisfaction with new points of contact was mixed. Many clients found the self-service options convenient, but others preferred the greater personal contact of the traditional caseworker model. Those who used the online application and accounts tended to be satisfied with the process and appreciated not having to travel to a local office in person. However, as noted earlier, some clients preferred submitting paper applications—either because they would be processed faster in some states or due to low levels of comfort with computers. Clients in Washington appreciated the faster service and recognized that being seen by the next available

worker expedited the local office experience considerably, but they still missed the traditional caseworker model.

Across states, clients were frustrated by the difficulty getting through to staff at call centers or local offices. Long wait times and sometimes being disconnected were common complaints. However, at least some clients acknowledged that being able to complete interviews and other tasks by telephone relieved them of the greater burden of traveling to and waiting at an office.

e.   Error Rates: SNAP QC Payment Errors Trended Downward Across All States

Payment error rates decreased nationwide and in all study states over the past decade (Figure 6). Although some modernization initiatives were expected to reduce errors, and others might increase them, there was no clear evidence across states of impacts in either direction. Stakeholders noted that specialization enabled staff to focus on a particular aspect of the SNAP process, potentially increasing their expertise in that task and thus reducing errors. Additionally, policy simplifications that reduced the number of criteria to be assessed and the amount of documentation required might have reduced the opportunities for staff to make errors. On the other hand, some eligibility workers suspected that telephone interviews and reduced contact with clients compromised the quality of information reported. Although it is clear that error rates across the nation are declining, the extent to which this national trend was influenced by common policy changes, modernization changes in some states, or other factors cannot be determined in this study.

Figure 6. Trends in SNAP QC Payment Error Rate Across Study States, 2000–2010
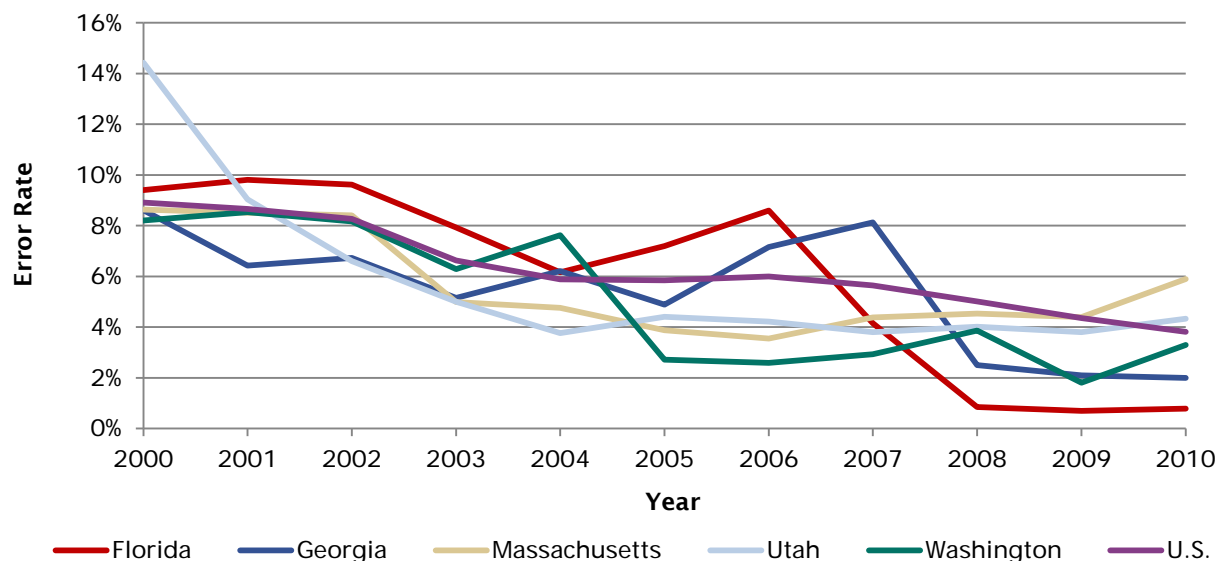
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

f.   Administrative Costs: Per Case Costs Declined Across All States

Average monthly administrative costs per case declined in all case study states, and nationwide, from 2001 to 2011. Figure 7 shows the state's share of total monthly administrative costs per case across this period. The declines were driven in part by growing caseloads, because fixed costs—such as the development and maintenance of various technological tools—are now spread across a larger number of cases. Cost reductions might also reflect efficiencies resulting from modernization.

Although it is impossible to disentangle these effects, costs per case declined more in each case study state than the national average, except for Utah which tracked national average changes.

Figure 7. Percentage Change in Average Monthly Costs per Case from 2000 Baseline, Across Study States, 2000–2011 (2005 dollars)

Source: Mathematica tabulations of average monthly costs and average monthly caseloads from the USDA, FNS. Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

In all study states, certification costs—the costs associated with processing applications and determining eligibility at certification and recertification periods—were by far the single largest component cost category, accounting for between 59 and 82 percent (across years and states) of the state's share of all administrative costs. However, trends in certification costs per case differed by state, declining in Florida and to a lesser extent in Washington, but rising in the other three study states—although less than nationwide.

g. SNAP Staff: Shifting Roles Helped Staff Handle Rising Caseloads, but Satisfaction Mixed

Staffing changes were one likely driver of falling costs in some states. With the exception of Massachusetts, all case study states experienced staff reductions over the study period. In most cases, the reduction was due to attrition; only Florida experienced layoffs. In that state in 2003 and in Utah in 2010, the state legislatures mandated reductions in staff. In response, SNAP agencies reduced staff by more than 40 percent in Florida over three years and by 10 percent in Utah in one year. In Georgia and Washington, hiring freezes drove decreasing staffing levels and uneven turnover rates in urban and rural areas resulted in uneven distribution of burden across offices. Because these changes were concurrent with the recession in most states, SNAP cases increased as staffing levels contracted, exacerbating the impact of the staff cuts. Even in Massachusetts, where the number of staff increased (but at a slower pace than SNAP caseloads), respondents considered inadequate staffing levels to be among the most pressing issues facing the agency.

Although the recession, rather than modernization, was the cause of staffing cuts in some states, modernization played a role in reducing burden on the remaining staff. Across states, stakeholders reported that the changes—particularly administrative restructuring and policy simplifications—had been necessary to enable them to handle the increased volume of cases. In Massachusetts, for example, one worker reported job satisfaction had been "2 out of 10" before the

intake/ongoing split but was "9 out of 10" after. A supervisor in Utah noted that, "If we had to do business the old way, we would have bankrupted the state."

Although staff were unanimous in feeling overwhelmed by rising caseloads, their reactions to modernization were mixed. Despite the prevailing sentiment in most states that they could not have handled the caseload increases under the old system, some staff disliked certain aspects of modernization. The decrease in extended personal contact with a consistent set of clients and the loss of the social worker aspect of the job were common complaints.

B. Conclusion

The experiences of the five case study states can provide informative lessons for other states to consider in planning and implementing their own SNAP modernization initiatives. The challenges encountered can provide advance warning of potential pitfalls other states should be prepared for—and perhaps identify ways to avoid—whereas successes attained can suggest paths to follow.

1. Implementation Challenges and Successes

The five case study states encountered a number of challenges in their efforts to modernize SNAP operations. Beside the contextual challenge of the recession, which dramatically increased the need for SNAP services at the time many key changes were being implemented, commonly reported challenges included (1) call volume that exceeded the capacity of call centers; (2) lack of clear communication with clients, community partners, and staff about changes; and (3) difficulties adapting to shared responsibility that resulted from administrative restructuring.

Despite such challenges, evidence from the case study states suggests several areas in which their modernization efforts have been successful:

- **Modernizing allowed staff to handle increasing caseloads.** Although SNAP staff had mixed feelings about some aspects of modernization, most agreed that the administrative restructuring and policy simplifications helped them handle the increased volume of work that came with the recession.

- **Large numbers of clients used new contact points.** Online applications and accounts, telephone interviews, and even call centers are widely used. Community partnership networks and CAPs have a narrower base, but still serve notable minorities of SNAP clients.

- **Increasing self-service options can reduce burden on staff.** In addition to being more convenient for some clients, self-service options typically result in less work for SNAP agency staff. For example, community partners can provide general assistance and online accounts can provide case-specific information, freeing staff from those tasks.

- **Policy simplifications can be inexpensive ways to reduce staff burden and barriers to access.** Although changes to policies must be clearly communicated to eligibility workers, simplifying policies does not require the capital expenditures of technology upgrades, nor does it involve the same level of disruption as a large-scale administrative restructuring.

- **Partners could help reach key subgroups.** Although partners do not necessarily submit large proportions of applications, they can assist those who need more personal attention than is provided under restructured staffing models. Many community

organizations already assist clients, including particularly hard-to-reach populations, with regard to SNAP, but state supports can help increase their effectiveness.

- **Modernization facilitated cost reduction**. Modernization enabled decreasing numbers of staff to handle increasing caseloads. Although reductions in costs per case might have been driven by increased caseloads and hiring freezes, rather than deliberate strategies, the efficiencies realized under modernization were instrumental in enabling the remaining staff to keep up with the rising caseloads.

- **Payment errors did not necessarily increase under modernization.** Although some eligibility workers suspected that the reduced contact with clients might compromise the quality of information reported, others noted that staff specialization and policy simplifications can have the opposite effect. QC error rates have fallen in all case study states and nationwide.

2. Additional Lessons for Other States

The analysis of the experiences of the five case study states yields several cross-cutting lessons that can inform future modernization efforts.

Modernization is a fluid, evolutionary process. Even states that began modernizing almost a decade ago continue to implement new modernization changes. As an example, online systems for client access are typically developed in stages, beginning with an online application, followed by online accounts, whose functionality can gradually expand to allow online change reporting, recertification, and so on. Administrative restructuring also often progresses over time, as staff identify new ways to specialize or local initiatives expand statewide.

The sequence of initiatives matters. Modernization changes do not occur in a vacuum, but often operate in tandem with one another. Some initiatives might ease the burden on staff immediately, thus facilitating the implementation of other activities that involve a longer adjustment period. In addition, the full benefits of certain initiatives might not be fully realized unless they are packaged with other complementary changes. For example, some types of administrative restructuring might be difficult without document imaging and electronic case records, which are key to sharing caseloads across locations, and new types of work management tools.

Consistency must be balanced with flexibility. In designing and implementing new processes, each state must find the right balance between consistency and flexibility to meet its particular needs, goals, and contexts. Because many modernization initiatives involve greater collaboration among staff, greater consistency in procedures might be necessary. However, flexibility can be important to adapt procedures to local conditions, is a good way to discover best practices during early implementation, and is necessary for continued evolution.

Modernization might be harder when caseloads are increasing. Although difficult economic times can provide an additional incentive for states to modernize their SNAP operations, changes might be easier to implement in advance, rather than in reaction to a recession. The 2008 recession, which increased caseloads and sometimes reduced state staff, was a contextual challenge faced by all five states. This context shaped the states' goals and often the specific initiatives implemented at the time, and affected key outcomes.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a critical source of support for many low-income families. Participation in the program has grown dramatically in recent years. From 2000 to 2011, the average monthly participation in SNAP grew from 17.2 million people to 44.7 million people, an increase of almost 160 percent.[6]

In response to record caseloads and increasingly constrained budgets, states have sought to change their approaches to administering social service programs, including SNAP. These changes, which are often meant to reduce administrative costs while maintaining or increasing program access, are commonly referred to as *modernization* and incorporate administrative restructuring, technology, community partnering, and policy simplification. The level of modernization and specific approaches implemented vary substantially by state, which presents opportunities for states to learn from one another's experiences.

Given the importance of modernization and its varied implementation across states, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) commissioned Mathematica Policy Research in 2009 to conduct in-depth case studies of selected states to examine their SNAP-related modernization efforts. In particular, the study focused on the experiences of **Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, Utah,** and **Washington.** The core objectives of the study are to examine the experiences of these states; investigate whether modernization efforts affect key outcome measures—efficiency, access, and integrity; and establish if, and to what extent, the modernization activities helped meet states' goals. This report presents a comprehensive picture of each state's experiences with modernization (including a sketch of modernization changes from the client's perspective), assesses the potential impacts of modernization, and identifies key lessons learned. The findings can help policymakers and program administrators—at the national and state levels—understand the implications of modernization changes and identify effective strategies and practices when replicating these efforts, while avoiding implementation pitfalls.

This chapter provides an overview of this study's definition of *modernization* and highlights why states modernize their administration of SNAP. It also describes the research objectives and methods (including the site selection approach), as well as some important limitations of the study design. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the organization of the remainder of this report.

A. State Modernization of Intake and Eligibility

Although *modernization* is an ambiguous term that means different things in different states, it generally refers to steps that state SNAP agencies take to streamline intake and eligibility determination. Modernization can include changes to how a client applies for benefits, how that client is interviewed, and how a client reports changes to his or her income over time. It can also include changes to less visible operations, such as how work is allocated across agency staff, how income is verified, and how supporting documentation is stored. In this study, as we describe later in the report, we found that regardless of whether a state has a comprehensive or piecemeal approach, modernization is generally viewed as a fluid, evolutionary process.

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[6] SNAP Participation and Costs. Data as of May 31, 2012. Available at http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/SNAPsummary.htm.

In general, modernization activities fall into four categories:[7] (1) restructuring of administrative functions to improve operational efficiency, (2) expanding uses of technology to improve efficiency or client access, (3) partnering with other organizations to improve access or assist clients with applications, and (4) simplifying policy to improve efficiency or access. Table I.1 provides some example activities that fall under each category.

Table I.1 Example Modernization Activities by Category

Modernization Category	Examples or Activities
Restructuring of Administrative Functions	• Specializing staff functions to promote efficiency and eliminating the caseworker model (assignment of specific caseworkers to specific cases) • Centralizing program operations to reduce the number of staff needed; closing some offices • Creating lobby online application stations where clients can apply for SNAP benefits
Expanding Applications of Technology	• Developing online applications that clients can submit (and sometimes legally sign) online • Enabling virtual storage of, and ready access to, client information through document imaging systems • Adopting automated eligibility systems that reduce the time needed to process applications • Allowing clients to manage case information through online accounts • Using automated-response software and call centers to field client inquiries • Verifying client data by linking data systems with other administrative databases
Partnering with Community Organizations and Businesses	• Partnering with community organizations to provide outreach, application assistance, and/or application intake • Involving community organizations in developing or translating online applications • Contracting with businesses for technology projects and innovation
Policy Simplification	• Allowing more clients to apply for benefits without a face-to-face interview • Reducing the amount of documentation clients must provide at application and recertification • Streamlining the eligibility interview process to shorten interview time • Reducing the frequency at which the household must report income changes

States have adopted different approaches to modernization. A recent national study found that in some states, modernization is a sweeping reconfiguration of the entire business model for administering SNAP and other programs (Keefe et al. 2012). In these states, the business model changes are supported by new technology and policy reforms. Yet in other states, modernization refers to a limited number of targeted changes, such as allowing clients to be interviewed over the phone. In these states, modernization is not a fundamental shift in the state's business model.

Modernization changes are not always adopted statewide, nor are the changes always fully implemented at one time. Instead, some states pilot test modernization changes in parts of a state or adopt initiatives incrementally over time. Additionally, in about one-fifth of the states, counties

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[7] Cody et al. (2008), Rowe et al. (2010), and Castner et al. (2012) all consider the same activities to be modernization. This study consolidates these activities into the same four categories of activities used in both Rowe et al. (2010) and Castner et al. (2012).

administer SNAP. In those states, some counties have instituted their own modernization efforts that may vary across the state.

Although states have always had some control over their intake and eligibility determination processes, the changes we refer to as modernization are relatively recent. Even those states that began early have made other changes more recently, and still others have only begun modernization efforts more recently (Keefe et al. 2012). These recent efforts to streamline procedures have been facilitated by FNS, which has granted states waivers and used policy changes to allow states more flexibility in running SNAP programs. But the changes also have been influenced by four other factors:

1. **Growing staff workload.** Staff workloads in a time of record SNAP caseload growth are a challenge for state social service agencies. In a 2008 survey of all state SNAP agencies, states indicated that the primary reason for modernizing the delivery of SNAP was to help staff handle increased caseloads (Rowe et al. 2010). The survey also found that economic downturns, state legislation, and high staff turnover at the local level also influenced their modernization decisions.

   All five case study states for this project experienced growth in their number of SNAP cases since their modernization efforts began, but at varied rates, ranging from slightly more than 100 percent in Georgia (compared with its 2005 level) to more than 300 percent in Florida and Washington (compared with their 2000 levels). Caseload increases, combined with budgetary restrictions, can serve as an impetus for efficiency improvements. For example, staff in Washington reported that the early forecasts of effects of the recession caused them to abandon their old model and come up with a new one. In Georgia, the workload pressure was not balanced across the state (caseloads rose more in urban areas during a hiring freeze). As a result, the state began planning for regionally based centralization and eventual statewide centralization to equalize the distribution of cases.

2. **Pressure to reduce costs.** Both Utah and Florida faced pressure to reduce the cost of delivering SNAP benefits when legislatures mandated cuts of specific dollar amounts to program administrative costs. In both states, as the legislatures considered privatizing some aspects of service delivery, the human services departments responded with a series of modernization changes that sought to demonstrate state staff could work as efficiently as private contractors (which legislators assumed would have lower costs) in these areas. The 2008 recession, experienced deeply in some states, greatly increased SNAP participation (and thus the caseload) while simultaneously reducing state tax revenues needed to support program operations. In the years following the recession, these circumstances frequently led to hiring freezes and/or layoffs among state staff in Florida, Georgia, and Washington.

3. **Influence by various stakeholders.** Stakeholders at the state and local levels may each try to motivate specific actions and changes at the state human services agency. At the state level, legislatures, legal advocates, and eligibility worker unions may each have their own perspectives on and recommendations for modernization. For example, legal advocates at the state level can challenge policies and procedures that they deem to be harmful to certain populations, often through litigation and aggressive administrative and policy advocacy, as we found in Massachusetts (see Chapter IV). Unions representing state SNAP staff can provide ideas for certain initiatives, require more in-depth planning to obtain agreement on the pursuit of others, or challenge the implementation of

initiatives that are put in place without union cooperation. In Massachusetts and Washington, eligibility worker union involvement was a factor in modernization. Locally, influential community organizations may advocate for modernization changes that reduce barriers to application and participation barriers for eligible individuals to improve client access, as in Massachusetts and Georgia. For instance, in 2001 a core partner in Massachusetts developed an online application for benefits that it then shared with the state, forming the basis for the state's current online SNAP application.

4. **National policy and economic forces.** At the federal level, FNS provides financial incentives or penalties to encourage state performance, including strong participation and low error rates. For example, FNS sanctioned Utah for high error rates in 1999 and 2000, prompting it to devise its current data verification system (eFind). Staff in Florida also described that scrutiny from FNS was a factor in their approach to modernization. More recently, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA) required states to expand online access to Medicaid, and many states are enacting provisions of the law that also extend Medicaid eligibility. These changes might affect SNAP operations as well as SNAP enrollment.

The influence of these four factors was actively felt by all five case study states and, although we provided key examples here, state-specific chapters in the report will illustrate additional ways in which these forces influenced state choices.

B. Study Objectives

In administering SNAP at the federal level, FNS is concerned with the potential effects that modernization initiatives can have on three key program goals:[8] (1) efficiency, or delivering the program at the lowest cost possible without sacrificing progress toward other goals; (2) access, or ensuring that eligible individuals can access benefits where and when they need them with a reasonable level of effort; and (3) integrity, which encompasses payment accuracy, fraud minimization, and provision of equal access. To that end, we address the following seven objectives in this report:

1. **Develop state profiles of modernization efforts and identify the geographic and caseload coverage for study states.** We identify the changes that Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, Utah, and Washington have made to their policies, administrative functions, and use of technology and partnering, as well as the goals the states intended to achieve. We also explore whether implementation occurred consistently across the state or varied by region within the state.

2. **Describe how key certification, recertification, and case management functions have changed.** We discuss the motivation for the modernization choices in each state, including the approaches to decision making and planning. We also identify how the changes affect the way staff and clients interact with the program throughout the lifecycle of a claim—at application, certification, recertification, and case management.

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[8] Castner et al. (2012) included a fourth program goal: customer service. Because there is such overlap between other goals and customer service, we do not include it as a goal here, but individual report chapters do discuss the levels of satisfaction with modernization initiatives—whether directly or indirectly—for both clients and staff.

3. **Describe the current roles and responsibilities of state and local SNAP staff and partners, and how they have changed.** We identify how modernization affected the roles and responsibilities of agency staff and how work is organized across different units in the state SNAP agency. We also discuss the changing roles of program partners, if any, including training that those partners may have received.

4. **Document the relationship between SNAP modernization initiatives and stakeholder satisfaction.** We describe the extent to which clients and potential clients are aware of the changes implemented by states, as well as their satisfaction with those efforts. We also identify how SNAP staff and partners feel about the changes and describe their experiences.

5. **Describe the current performance of each state's modernization initiatives and the level of outcome variability within each state.** We examine how well the initiatives are meeting the intended goals in each state by examining several performance measures, including error rates, timeliness, and administrative costs; and the extent to which clients use alternative contact points.

6. **Compare pre-, current, and post-modernization performance.** We discuss trends in key performance measures (including client access and satisfaction, payment error rates, administrative costs, and staff levels and satisfaction), with a focus on how the implementation of modernization activities in each state may be associated with these trends.

7. **Document the study's main take-away points for use by other states and for future-study consideration.** We discuss the success of the activities in meeting the states' goals in the context of the full set of modernization activities in place. We also compare the findings across the five case-study states.

C. Research Approach

To address the study objectives, we conducted two rounds of site visits to each of five states.[9] The states were selected because they had implemented a large number of modernization initiatives—including initiatives spanning most or all of the four categories of modernization activities—and because their efforts were well established in terms of years and dispersion across a state.

Within each state, we selected a mix of locations to visit to see how modernization efforts were implemented in different types of locales—urban and rural. During the site visits, we interviewed staff from all levels of state SNAP agencies, community partners that were involved in outreach and application assistance, and other program stakeholders. We also conducted four focus groups in each state with SNAP participants. Finally, we collected extant data from each of the study states, such as administrative case records, application statistics, performance data, and other relevant materials about state modernization efforts.

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[9] The five states that agreed to participate in the study each received a $75,000 stipend from FNS.

1. Site Selection

The five study states were intentionally selected based on state demographic, geographic, and modernization-specific characteristics. First, we developed an index that ranked all of the states and the District of Columbia based on the number and type of modernization changes they had implemented. Then, using the natural break in the distribution of states along this index, we identified 15 states that had undertaken numerous modernization steps. For these states, we conducted a second-stage analysis to identify states that had implemented modernization changes broadly across the state, for a long period, and with minimal negative consequences. This process pointed to nine states as being the most likely to help us achieve the project's objectives, and together with FNS we identified the final group of five[10] for inclusion in the study.

The final states selected through this process were Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, Utah, and Washington (Table I.2). These states represent four FNS geographic regions (Southeast, Northeast, Mountain Plains, and Western) and include a mixture of state populations, geographic sizes, and SNAP participation levels, along with some variation in the number and maturity of initiatives they implemented. However, because we intentionally selected states with several modernization initiatives in place, the variation among study states is not as great as the variation nationwide.

Table I.2. Characteristics of Case Study States at Time of Selection (2009)

	Florida	Georgia	Massachusetts	Utah	Washington
Initiatives Implemented	12	8	9	8	6
Start of Modernization Efforts	2005	2007	2006	2005	2000
Breadth of Efforts	Statewide	Statewide	Statewide	Statewide	Statewide
FNS Region	Southeast	Southeast	Northeast	Mountain Plains	Western
2009 Population (thousands)	18,500	9,800	6,600	2,800	6,800
2009 SNAP participants (thousands)	1,950	1,290	628	185	761

Notes: Changes to states' status since 2009, although reflected in the chapters later in this report, do not appear in this table.

                In Washington, some initiatives were statewide, whereas others were only regional at the time of 2009 site selection.

Within each state, we selected individual sites to participate in the study. In each state, the state capital was chosen as one of the sites. Other sites were selected to ensure a mix of urban and rural localities and multiple regions within each state, as well as diversity in implementation (for example, pilot sites and early and late adopters). To identify these sites, we worked with officials in each state. Mathematica suggested a number of locations based on our knowledge of the implementation of modernization activities across the state, as well as logistical considerations related to visiting multiple locations in a large state during only two rounds of site visits. We also took into account the suggestions of state agency staff, as well as the opinions of other knowledgeable sources, such as

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[10] We also originally selected Wisconsin, a county-administered state, to participate in the study. However, Wisconsin dropped out of the study before the start of data collection.

community partners. In total, we visited five locations in Florida and Massachusetts, six locations in Georgia and Utah, and seven locations in Washington (Table I.3).

Table I.3. Locations Visited in Case Study States

Site Visit Location (Round Visited)	Primary Rationale for Selection
Florida **Site Visits: October 2011 and January 2012**	
Tallahassee (1)	State capital
Jacksonville (1)	Call center location; proximity to state capital
Ft. Myers (2)	Interview partner demonstration project
Immokalee (2)	Rural; migrant population; regional diversity
Miami (2)	Largest urban area in the state; call center location
Georgia **Site Visits: November 2011 and February 2012**	
Atlanta (Fulton County) (1)	State capital
McDonough (Henry County) (1)	Regional diversity; proximity to other locations
Albany (Dougherty County) (1)	Call center location
Savannah (Chatham County) (2)	Second urban location; prominent community partner
Brunswick (Glynn County) (2)	Headquarters for region that includes Savannah
Reidsville (Tattnall County) (2)	Rural; regional diversity; proximity to Savannah
Massachusetts **Site Visits: November 2011 and February 2012**	
Boston (1)	State capital; call center location; centralized online application processing unit location
Fitchburg (1)	Intake/ongoing split localized initiative
Springfield (2)	Pilot location for intake/ongoing split; centralized online application processing unit
Holyoke (2)	Intake/ongoing split localized initiative; rural; large Hispanic population
Northampton (2)	Rural; community partner location
Utah **Site Visits: October 2011 and February 2012**	
Salt Lake City (1)	State capital; call center location
Ogden (1)	Call center location; diverse local population
Midvale (1)	Centralized Imaging Operations unit location
St. George (2)	Call center location; largest city in southern Utah
Cedar City (2)	Serves rural population
Kanab (2)	Serves rural population
Washington **Site Visits: October 2011 and January 2012**	
Olympia (1)	State capital
Seattle (1)	Largest urban area in the state
Yakima (1)	Region staff; call center; document imaging hub
Wapato (1)	Rural; central Washington; unique partnerships with local tribe (Yakama Nation)
Colfax (2)	Unique client population (college students)
Moses Lake (2)	Rural; eastern Washington, community partner location
Spokane (2)	Urban; eastern Washington; region staff

Note: In Georgia, where local offices are named by counties, we list both the city of the site visit and the office name for ease of reference. The intake/ongoing split for assigning work in Massachusetts is described in Chapter IV.

2. Data Collection

In each state, we collected primary data through interviews and focus groups. We also collected extant data. Both data sources were central to the analysis presented in this report.

Primary data were collected during two rounds of site visits in each state. During each visit, we conducted interviews with SNAP staff at all levels of the agency, community partners, and other stakeholders. We also conducted four focus groups in each state, two with clients and two with potential clients (eligible nonparticipants), offering facilitation in Spanish when needed. Finally, we took tours, watched demonstrations, and conducted observations of SNAP operations. Appendix A contains a detailed description of our data collection approach. The total number of interviews and focus groups ranged from 33 in Massachusetts and Utah to 42 in Florida, and the total number of respondents ranged from 73 in Massachusetts to 149 in Florida.

We collected extant data from the study states and other relevant sources. These data help document the modernization changes made in each state, identify any trends associated with the implementation of modernization initiatives, and examine whether the modernization changes are potentially driving changes in key program outcomes. Extant data collected during the course of the study include the following:

- Monthly administrative case records

- Monthly application statistics, including data on application mode when available

- SNAP quality control (QC) data

- Annual administrative cost data

- Details on waivers implemented by the state

When possible, although availability varied by state, we also gathered performance data about specific initiatives and other descriptive documents, such as agency communications, reports, and fact sheets. Data shown in tables and figures represent all available data, through the end of 2011. Dates of data availability vary by source and by state. Appendix A describes the sources and uses of these extant data in greater detail.

3. Limitations of Research Design

The study was designed to collect comprehensive information from the five participating states to provide a detailed picture of their experiences with modernization, identify key lessons learned, and assess the potential impacts of modernization. The study was descriptive in nature and focused on a specific time period in a specific subset of states. Importantly, the study does not include a cost-benefit analysis. Although we provide descriptive information on costs and benefits, we do not evaluate here whether the benefits outweigh the costs, because balancing these aspects depends on how policymakers and other stakeholders give relative weight to aspects such as access and client satisfaction. Readers should consider four important limitations when interpreting and extrapolating the study findings.

First, our understanding about the implementation of modernization efforts in each state over the past decade is based primarily on interviews with state and local SNAP and partner staff. Some staff who were most directly involved in the modernization initiatives are no longer with the state or the community partners. Other staff could have been in different positions at the time when specific initiatives were implemented, which limited their ability to speak authoritatively on all issues. And because many years might have passed since initiatives were implemented, the information we collected during interviews is also subject to recall error. Nonetheless, the staff we spoke with were the most knowledgeable about current and past modernization initiatives and therefore the study is based on the best available information.

The second limitation is that the study design lacks the causal validity to conclude that (1) any changes in outcomes were caused by the modernization changes or (2) outcomes that have no change were unaffected by the modernization changes. However, we do identify potentially positive and negative aspects of modernization in each of the study states, and the analysis of potential impacts can prove informative when trying to understand the role that modernization potentially plays in outreach, participation, payment accuracy, and program costs.

Third, modernization is a complex and continually evolving process, which makes assessing the impacts of specific initiatives quite complicated, if not impossible. Specific initiatives are often rolled out across offices through pilots, over time, and with small, but important differences as the state learns what has worked well and what still has to be improved. This fluidity makes it difficult to pinpoint exactly when an initiative first began or when it was fully implemented. Changes can also be purposefully implemented as a package or are simply implemented at the same time with other initiatives.

Finally, the study lacks representation of county-administered states. Twenty percent of states administer SNAP at the county level (USDA, FNS 2011). In those states, some counties have instituted their own modernization initiatives. As such, we did not collect specific information regarding the challenges faced by states and counties when implementing initiatives at the county level, nor about the opportunities/advantages counties might have in terms of implementing initiatives. Potential differences could be fewer barriers to implementation, fewer stakeholders, the presence of very active local-partners, and so on. Nonetheless, the information provided in the report remains instructive to all levels of SNAP administration and highlights many of the same challenges and opportunities presented to counties in county-administered states.

D. Organization of the Report

The remainder of this report discusses each study state's experiences in turn (Chapters II through VI). In each state's chapter, we assess the goals and approach to modernization, summarize the key changes implemented, and describe how the process of applying for and remaining on SNAP has changed from a client's perspective. Because modernization motivations vary by state, we also discuss the trends in key program outcomes for each state—such as client access and satisfaction, error rates, administrative costs, and staff satisfaction to explore how, if at all, those outcomes changed over time. In a concluding chapter (VII), we then integrate findings across the five states to identify key aspects of modernization, as well as changes in outcomes across the states. We also discuss the key themes and lessons learned, including implementation challenges and successes, which can be informative for other states as they consider their own next steps to modernize SNAP operations.

Additionally, we provide a glossary of terms used throughout the report, a description of our data collection approach (Appendix A), supplementary tables with additional detail on outcomes listed in each state's chapter (Appendices B through F), alternate SNAP application tables that include recertifications for Florida and Washington (Appendix G), an overview of key modernization changes in each state (Appendix H), and complete modernization profiles for each state (Appendix I).

II. CASE STUDY OF MODERNIZATION: FLORIDA

Modernization in Florida was initially driven by a 2003 state legislative mandate to reduce administrative program costs and staffing levels. In response, the Department of Children and Families (DCF)—the state department responsible for SNAP—cut staff and closed local offices while simultaneously pursuing several efficiency-motivated modernization changes. Between 2004 and 2011, the state reduced staff levels by 41 percent; by 2012, it had incurred a net loss of 78 offices (54 percent). Caseload growth of 183 percent between 2004 and 2011 and incentives to reduce error rates reinforced the importance of the state's modernization efforts.

To generate efficiencies with a smaller workforce, DCF restructured remaining staff and emphasized telecommuting, streamlined policies, installed a robust online system for client self-service, enhanced workflow management tools for staff, and formed partnerships with community organizations. In doing so, Florida essentially redefined the concept of the "local office" and the role of community partners. Through many changes and refinements, Florida has developed a relatively advanced SNAP delivery system. Figure II.1 pictures the locations in Florida included in our site visits, as well as another notable city discussed in this chapter.

Figure II.1. Sites Visited in Florida and Other Notable Cities
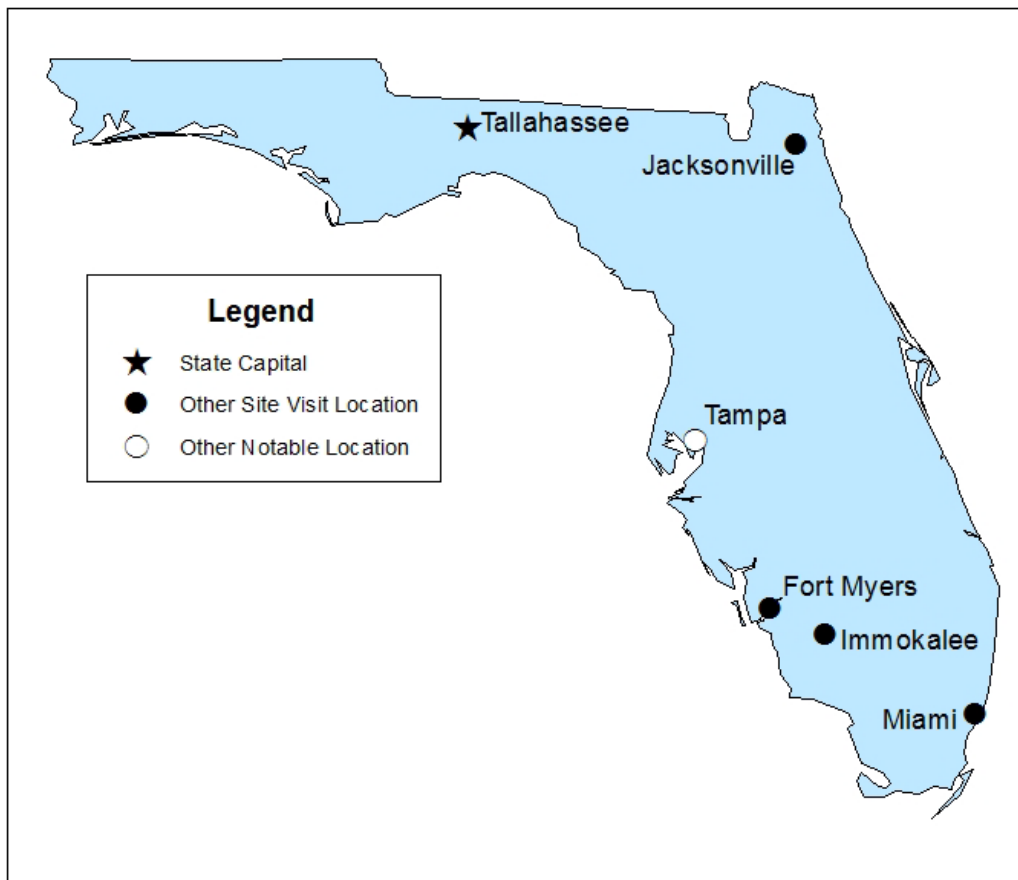
Note: Tampa is the site of a DCF call center but was not visited for the study.

Outcomes following modernization were generally positive. By December 2011, 1.8 million households were enrolled, a fourfold increase from 2000. This increase reflects growth in the

number of people eligible for SNAP, as well as increases in program accessibility. The state's Program Access Index (PAI) ranking—a measure of the proportion of low-income people who enroll—increased, moving the state from 44th to 34th in the nation in terms of access between 2005 and 2010. Administrative costs and payment error rates both declined, despite significant caseload increases. Overall, modernization helped save Florida millions of dollars.

According to reports from staff and clients, clients were generally satisfied with how SNAP administration has evolved, despite some challenges. Clients with computer skills found the online tools convenient. Those who needed assistance to understand basic eligibility rules and complete the application process might have struggled more. For clients and staff alike, high demand was the largest hurdle. Clients reported facing great difficulty reaching the call center and local offices for interviews or assistance with questions.

Ultimately, DCF workers generally viewed modernization as necessary for managing caseload growth. Not only have staff adjusted to the specific modernization changes so far, they have become accustomed to the culture of evolving business processes. There is momentum for continuous improvement, or as one administrator noted, "With modernization, it's something you're constantly tweaking."

This chapter begins with a summary of Florida's efforts to modernize SNAP administration along four dimensions: administrative restructuring, technology, partnerships, and policy. The second half of the chapter details how caseloads, access, costs, and other main outcomes have changed over the period in which these changes were implemented, and describes staff and client satisfaction with the changes. The chapter concludes with a discussion of lessons that can be drawn from Florida's modernization experience.

A. Description of Modernization

As in other chapters, this section discusses the state's goals for modernizing, contextual factors motivating its goals, its planning and decision-making processes, and a summary of where its modernization efforts currently stand. Next, we provide an overview of the major initiatives the state has undertaken to modernize staffing and administrative structures, technology, partnerships with community organizations, and policies and procedures. The section also includes a description of how these changes, taken together, have altered clients' experiences applying for benefits, recertifying, and managing their cases.

1. Approach to Modernization

In 2003, the state legislature required DCF to reduce administrative costs and staff levels for SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid.[11] This led the state to develop four goals for streamlining program delivery: (1) reduce costs, (2) reduce staff burden, (3) reduce errors, and (4) expand access. DCF officials examined the trade-offs between modernizing internal procedures, privatizing, and taking a mixed approach. Based in part on experiences from the state's SunCoast region (which showed

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[11] SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid are administered together through the Automated Community Connection to Economic Self-Sufficiency (ACCESS) program office and are collectively referred to as ACCESS Florida, or ACCESS programs.

internal reforms could generate cost savings) and the time required to obtain a federal waiver permitting privatization, Florida's governor elected to modernize (Cody et al. 2008).

This decision paved the way for DCF to adopt statewide reforms. Early efforts included redesigned office lobbies to encourage clients to self-serve; streamlined requirements for interviews, applications, and verification; specialized change processing; and a document imaging system. The state also began developing community partnerships and examined its policies after the agency's Office of the Inspector General determined the eligibility determination process was "unnecessarily complex" (Cody et al. 2008).

SNAP processes continued to evolve to manage caseload growth resulting from the recession. Monthly cases grew from 656,000 in 2007 to 1.8 million by the end of 2011—an increase of just over 175 percent (Figure II.2).[12] Staff at all levels actively sought ways to generate greater efficiencies to alleviate burden on their limited workforce and further reduce costs.

Figure II.2. Number of Cases per Month, 2000–2011, Florida
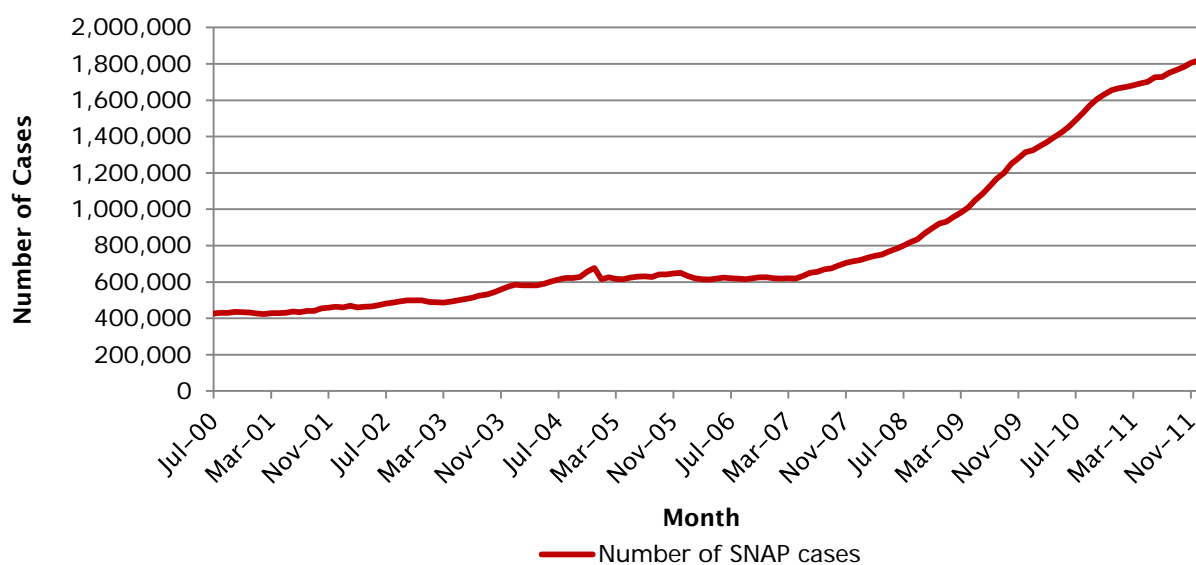
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Note: Data shown in figures represent all available data through the end of 2011.

Although state officials selected major initiatives, leaders in the field exercised some autonomy in determining how to implement day-to-day processes. At the time of this study, many opportunities for feedback and collaboration across the hierarchy existed, although some respondents suggested this was not initially the case. Regular meetings provided opportunities to exchange ideas and best practices across regions and staff levels. The meetings reportedly also bred friendly competition between regions and encouraged decision makers to think creatively. For

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[12] The months included in the data provided by SNAP agencies varied across states. For example, cases per month in Florida range from July 2000 through December 2011, while the same figure for Georgia ranges from January 2005 through December 2011. In some states, the months for which specific data elements are available also varied. For more details, see Appendix A.

example, one regional director reported that hearing her region had the lowest rate of online account usage inspired them to hold a weekend tutorial event for clients. There were also feedback mechanisms for staff to submit comments on policy and technology changes.

As of early 2012, Florida operated an advanced SNAP delivery system, reflecting mature initiatives in all four categories of modernization—policy, technology, staff restructuring, and partnerships—many of which have been fine-tuned over the years. The online system was enhanced to provide clients with additional self-service options, the number of community partners increased by one-third from 2006 to 2012, and greater use of telecommuting enabled more office closures. Statements such as "With modernization, it's something you're constantly tweaking" and roles "are shifting all the time as we fine-tune it, because it's still not where it needs to be" captured a mood of continuous evaluation and evolution.

2. Summary of Changes, by Category

a. Restructuring of Administrative Functions

To help achieve the level of cost savings and staff reductions the state legislature required, Florida closed offices and cut staffing levels through layoffs, attrition, and lateral transfers to different state government departments (Cody et al. 2008). The number of eligibility workers for ACCESS programs declined 41 percent—from 7,208 to 4,247 workers—between January 2004 and January 2012. DCF used a comparative merit system to help make staffing decisions (Cody et al. 2008). Instead of basing staffing decisions solely on tenure, DCF ranked staff according to their performance, competencies in the modernized work environment, discipline history, and job functions (Cody et al. 2008). (See Section B for a discussion of changes in staff levels.)

Reducing the staff presence in local offices gave the state flexibility to consolidate and close offices, thus saving large amounts on overhead. By 2012, 67 local offices were open statewide across Florida's 67 counties, down from 145 in 2004, with potentially more offices closing in the future.[13] DCF sought to close offices that would allow it to achieve financial savings (for example, it had less incentive to close offices in a state-owned building). To minimize travel burden for clients, the state attempted to close offices near another office. When it did close an office, it typically sought to enlist community partners in the same neighborhood.

Restructuring administrative functions to improve efficiency for remaining staff was thus a critical reform in Florida. Staff functions were specialized and centralized in a shift from the traditional caseworker model to a process-based model. In the caseworker model, a single worker owns a case from application for as long as the household remains on SNAP. In a process-based model, different specialized workers focus on different tasks in the certification and case management process, and the case passes to another worker once a given task is completed. By early 2012, local offices were focusing on intake and recertification, regionwide Case Maintenance Units (CMUs) handled system-generated changes, and statewide call centers were responsible for client-reported changes and questions (Figure II.3).

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[13] The number of local offices includes new storefront locations, described below. Mathematica calculations are based on data presented in Cody et al. (2008) and office listings on the DCF website as of August 2012.

Figure II.3. Summary of Changes to Administrative Functions, Florida

Description of Activity	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Call Center Interactive Voice Response (IVR) functions				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Provide general information				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Provide account-specific information				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Call Center Staff Functions	▨	▨	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Answer general questions	▨	▨	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Provide account information	▨	▨	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Conduct interviews[a]									■	■	■
Process changes submitted by callers	▨	▨	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Process changes submitted online									■	■	■
Specialization and/or Centralization of Staff for:											
Conducting interviews or determining eligibility				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Case maintenance	▨	▨	▨	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Process-based model				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Telecommuting				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Source: Information reported to Mathematica by the Florida DCF.

[a] The call center began conducting postponed expedited interviews for all regions in May 2009. In addition, as of 2012, it conducted a portion of regular interviews for the Northwest region and interviews for callers who had difficulty reaching their local office for an interview.

▨ Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation
■ Initiative in statewide implementation
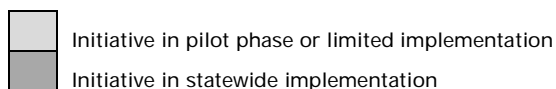
In **local offices,**[14] clerical workers and eligibility workers perform specialized tasks. During the study period, clerical workers scanned paper items and tagged verification documents, linking them to a client's record through the document imaging system. At least one circuit centralized these tasks across all its local offices. DCF was planning to consolidate scanning of inbound mail and indexing of scanned and other electronic documents at the state level, to prepare for planned privatization of these functions in fall 2012. Paper applications or verification documents that clients drop off will continue to be processed at local offices. Another group of specialized clerical workers registers applications, double-checks clients' automated expedited status, and assigns applications to eligibility workers in round-robin fashion, in which the next available application goes to the next available worker.

Eligibility workers typically specialize in either interviewing or processing. Regardless of their specialization, however, they work on both application and recertification cases. Interviewers focus on interviewing clients and recording responses in the eligibility system. Processors review application information and interview responses to determine eligibility. Processors also investigate client information they receive through the data exchanges and alerts system. Data exchanges refer to connections with external agencies, such as Social Security and vital statistics; alerts refer to DCF-generated notifications of potential changes to the status of a case.

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[14] Local office operations are administered at the circuit level, rather than at the county level, to align with judicial circuit courts. Florida has six administrative regions, spanning 20 circuits. Circuits are comprised of between one and seven counties, which may or may not have a local office. Circuit administrators may oversee a single local office or all offices in the circuit. Some local offices consist of backroom operations only and are not open to clients.

Some senior eligibility workers serve as designated case reviewers. DCF reinstated this position (which had existed in the mid-1990s but subsequently been folded into the role of supervisors) to reduce error rates. Designated case reviewers check the accuracy of a set number of cases per month, mentor processors as they encounter mistakes, and identify training needs. They review cases in nearly "real time"—the day or week after a case was processed—to catch mistakes early. All types of workers are arranged in units based in a single office, circuitwide, across multiple circuits, or regionwide, depending on the degree to which local offices are centralized.

In addition to specializing and centralizing staff roles, DCF sent eligibility workers home to work. Telecommuting began in 2005 with experienced, high-performing eligibility workers. Permission to work from home was considered a privilege, one that administrators were glad to offer staff during a stressful time. In 2011, state officials set a goal of having 75 percent of eligibility workers telecommute and envisioned having nearly all processors and interviewers telecommute in the future. Indeed, whole wings of offices visited as part of this study stood empty, due in large part to telecommuting. One state official reported that the state was working to make telecommuting one of the top requirements in job postings. Clerical staff in lobbies or those who use document imaging or other equipment, as well as new staff, would continue to work at offices.

DCF considerably altered the appearance and function of remaining local offices to align with the shift from a caseworker-driven administration approach to one based on technology and client self-service. State officials redesigned traditional waiting room lobbies in local offices and created separate "storefront" locations. Storefronts contain the same equipment and staffing as lobbies but do not have the backroom eligibility operations. They tend to be located in communities where local offices closed and, like local offices, were commonly placed in strip malls for convenience.

At the time of the study, both types of locations generally contained many computer stations, with privacy screens for clients to access online applications or their accounts; fax and photocopy machines to submit verification documents; scanners to upload verification to their accounts; and telephones to reach the call center. DCF also created a new staff position (called "meeter-greeter") to direct walk-in clients to available resources and help with basic, non-eligibility questions. The goal was for clients walking in to be able to self-serve with minimal assistance. Indeed, the changed function of local offices is perhaps evidenced by the fact that DCF's website no longer lists the telephone numbers of its local offices.

DCF created **CMUs,** a specialized type of unit, to focus on ongoing functions that do not require contact with clients. A key role of CMU staff is to monitor and investigate client information they receive through the data exchanges and alerts system *between* intake and recertification periods. (As stated above, processors in local offices address information received at intake and recertification). CMU workers investigate changes to client information in DCF and external databases and process necessary updates to a client's SNAP case and benefit determination; they also apply and lift SNAP sanctions.[15] All CMUs are regionwide, although CMU staff are not necessarily housed in a single office in each region. That is, the CMU for a given region is somewhat virtual, with the staff serving it (including telecommuters) scattered across several locations.

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[15] Another key role of the CMU is to track bills for clients enrolled in the state's Medically Needy program. This program provides medical assistance to clients after they incur a certain amount in medical bills each month.

The **call center** (referred to as the Customer Call Center in Florida) assumed responsibility for other case maintenance functions. Call agents responded to client inquiries, processed changes clients reported online or by telephone between recertification periods, and conducted select interviews (Figure II.3). The call center also responded to client complaints, inquiries and processing for out-of-state callers, and inquiries from medical providers. As in local offices, different staff performed each task. The call center began conducting postponed expedited interviews for all regions in May 2009. By early 2012, call agents were interviewing clients who reported difficulty reaching their local office for an interview (see discussion in Section B), as well as clients in one region that dedicated staff positions to the call center for that purpose. The first call center locations opened in Miami and Tampa as change centers. After opening a third location in Jacksonville in December 2004, service was extended statewide. A fourth location operated for 18 months using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds; it focused on interviews, most of which have since shifted back to local offices.[16] During the study period, call centers were also preparing to have their staff start telecommuting in early 2012.

The call center launched the Automated Response Unit, an interactive voice response (IVR) unit or "phone tree" technology in 2005 to provide personalized answers to some common questions (such as a client's benefit amount) and to direct callers who wished to speak with an agent to the appropriate queue. The IVR permitted callers anywhere in the state to dial a single toll-free number and follow automated prompts in a recorded menu that would either answer their question or route the call to the next available call operator in any location. Before the IVR was available, DCF instructed clients in different parts of the state to call different call center locations.

b. Expanding Uses of Technology

In addition to streamlining administrative functions, Florida expanded and improved technology systems to generate further efficiencies and cost savings (see Figure II.4 and Appendix B for more details). As one state official stated, "The backbone of our system is self-service." To this end, an online application with an electronic signature capability has been available on the internet since 2005. In 2008 Florida launched online accounts called My ACCESS Accounts, which provide clients with information on their application status and benefits. As of 2011, clients could also log in to their account to recertify, report changes, view notifications and appointment times, and upload documentation. The goal was for clients to rely on these tools instead of calling the call center. Electronic submissions also eliminated some effort required of frontline workers, including data entry and determination of expedited status.

In addition to expanding technology to promote client access, Florida made significant investments in the technology systems that SNAP workers and community partners used. These included a document imaging system to support paperless client files, two key workflow management tools for staff (the ACCESS Management System [AMS] and Data & Reports), a Quality Management System (QMS) for case reviews, and community partner tools to support the work of community organizations in helping clients access services.

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[16] Some staff from the closed location continued to work as virtual call agents.

Figure II.4. Summary of Expanded Technology Applications, Florida

Description of Activity	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Online Eligibility Screening Tool				S	S	S	S	S	S
Online Application[a]	P	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Ability to save incomplete application for later session	P	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Electronic signature		S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Application status				S	S	S	S	S	S
Online List of Community Partners				S	S	S	S	S	S
Online Account Functionality				S	S	S	S	S	S
Current benefit amount				S	S	S	S	S	S
Benefit history				S	S	S	S	S	S
Documents submitted					S	S	S	S	S
Verification needed				S	S	S	S	S	S
Recertify online						S	S	S	S
Report changes						S	S	S	S
Upload documents							S	S	S
Email notification of account changes or new notices								S	S
Document Imaging			S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Electronic Case Files				S	S	S	S	S	S
Computer Systems Changes for SNAP Workers:									
Workflow management tools		S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Quality management tools				S	S	S	S	S	S
Community Partner Tools:									
Online search engine				S	S	S	S	S	S
Tracking system			S	S	S	S	S	S	S

Source:　Information reported to Mathematica by the Florida DCF.

[a] The online application was first released in 2004 on intranet-accessible computers available in the lobbies of local offices.

☐ Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation

■ Initiative in statewide implementation

- In 2006, Florida implemented a **document imaging system** to take advantage of the portability and space savings of a paperless file system. Workers scanned historical records. As of the study period, new items entered the system in several ways: (1) clerical workers scan paper items clients mail in or drop off; (2) clients or partners fax items, which automatically enter into an electronic queue; (3) clients scan and upload verification to their online accounts; or (4) workers save screenshots of verification information they capture from websites, such as one reporting unemployment compensation. Clerical workers categorically index each piece of information so eligibility workers can find them more easily and link items to individuals. (As mentioned, DCF was planning to outsource most scanning and indexing functions in fall 2012). From September 2011 through February 2012, DCF received approximately 542,200 faxes each month (24,300 faxes per day), and clients uploaded an average of 24,500 documents to their accounts each month (800 per day).

- The **ACCESS Management System (AMS),**[17] one of two important workflow management tools, connects the state's legacy mainframe eligibility system, FLORIDA, with the online system. AMS was planned to consist of four modules. Modules for client registration, work management (which tracks workflow and enables round-robin assignments), and application entry were introduced in 2007, 2009, and 2012 respectively. Key advantages include the ability to conduct cross-office round-robin assignments at the push of a button, less data entry from the online application, automatic expedited status determinations, and the ability to manipulate case information stored in FLORIDA via a user-friendly web interface. The final module will be used to determine eligibility and calculate benefits. When complete, workers will no longer have to work directly in FLORIDA, although it will continue to operate in the background. For example, the FLORIDA system will still compute eligibility and benefits determinations, but results will appear in AMS. Despite these benefits, one drawback to building a web interface for FLORIDA, rather than replacing FLORIDA with a web-based and rules-based engine, is that DCF must continue to incorporate policy or procedural changes into FLORIDA, which can be complex.[18]

- **Data & Reports system,** the other major workflow management tool, links data from AMS, FLORIDA, online applications, the call center and IVR, and community partners, among other data sources. Staff use this system to monitor status and performance, and generate reports. Through a user-friendly interface, staff can pull up aggregate or detailed data, such as the status of interviews assigned to a worker in a particular circuit. Some data are available daily, others weekly or monthly. DCF first introduced the Data & Reports system in 2000 to track workload and performance in a centralized way. The state updated the system since modernizing to bring together more data systems and generate more types of reports and statistics, and at shorter intervals, to make the reports relevant to the new administrative structure (Cody et al. 2008).

- The **Quality Management System (QMS),** launched in 2001 and upgraded in 2008, is used by senior workers, designated reviewers, and supervisors to conduct case reviews. This system allows staff at state and local levels to view all cases, filter by type of case, and identify error-prone cases, as well as error trends. By pinpointing error trends, QMS helps inform training needs and policy simplifications. Staff can also use QMS to quickly pull cases that meet specified criteria to assess performance following a policy or procedural change.

- Finally, DCF developed **community partner tools** to accompany the community partnership network (described in the next section). A partner tracking system stores information such as the location of each partner and level of services offered. The system also tracks the number of applications that originate at each partner site—a key performance metric. The tracking system also drives the online search function clients use to find partners.

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[17] AMS replaced Florida's Intake Management System (IMS), which had been in place since 2005. IMS tracked the status of applications and staff assignments, and included reporting and search functions. AMS was first implemented in 2007, past the data collection period covered in Cody et al. (2008).

[18] At the time of the visit, the state was conducting a feasibility study to help determine whether to replace FLORIDA with a rules-based system; it did not do so earlier due to the high costs involved.

Modernization in Florida from the Client's Perspective

Modernization in Florida created new contact points for clients and equipped them to self-serve. The online system, telephone interviews, staff restructuring, and a network of community partners significantly altered how clients interact with SNAP throughout their case. Rather than waiting to meet with staff, clients who enter an office lobby today typically apply on a computer, fax or upload verification, interview by telephone, and log on to their account or contact the call center to learn details of their case and report changes—in fact, it is no longer necessary for clients to visit an office at all. Staff restructuring, office closures, and emphasis on telecommuting have further limited clients' interactions with workers, while expanded partnerships opened opportunities for assistance within their community. As one administrator stated, "Modernization was designed for as little contact [between staff and clients] as possible."

Application. Nearly all clients in Florida (approximately 90 percent) apply online. Although paper applications are available upon request, staff strongly encourage clients to apply online. Clients can complete an online eligibility screener before applying, which can give people who feel uncertain an estimate of whether they may be eligible. Those without a home computer can visit a local office or "storefront" (the lobby-only portion of services in a location with no back-room staff support). In both, clients will find many computer terminals and one or more "meeter-greeters"— lobby clerks available to help navigate the computer and answer basic questions. For assistance with eligibility questions, clients can try to speak with a supervisor in the building or contact the call center.

With many offices closed and eligibility workers largely inaccessible in person, some clients may prefer to visit a local partner for basic SNAP information, computer access, and application assistance. To find a local partner that offers the services they need, clients can search on the DCF website or obtain a list of partners in office lobbies. Workforce agencies, hospitals, food banks, and other direct service providers, as well as libraries, are typical partners.

Certification. After applying, clients must interview and submit verification. Nearly all clients interview by telephone with specialized workers who may be based outside their county. Telephones are available in lobbies or some partner sites for this purpose. Interviews typically last approximately 10 minutes, with longer ones for clients whose household circumstance raise additional questions. Interviewers first attempt to cold call clients. They send notifications by mail or through online accounts to clients they do not reach, instructing clients to call for an interview by a certain date. Some areas continue to offer in-person interviews for walk-in clients, especially for those who are homeless or harder to reach by telephone. In a limited number of locations on a pilot basis, clients can interview with a partner.

After interviewing, clients receive mailed or electronic instructions on which verification to send. Online accounts also offer an opportunity for clients to view required verification, as well as a list of the items DCF has already received. Clients mail in or drop off verification, upload verification to their account, or fax verification to the office in their area responsible for processing; equipment is available in lobbies or partner sites. Faxing and scanning are increasingly common as offices encourage greater client self-service to reduce burden on staff. Indeed, those who upload verification to their account also tag each document, thereby eliminating a step workers would otherwise take. To learn their eligibility status, clients can sign in to their account, contact the call center, or receive a mailed or electronic notification. Eligible clients receive electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards in the mail from a vendor.

Recertification. Every six months, clients repeat most of the certification steps described above to recertify. They receive a mailed or electronic notification letting them know when to recertify. As with initial applications, online recertification is most common, and specialized interviewers typically cold call clients before sending a notification with an interview deadline. Clients who recertify online will find their information pre-populated so they can quickly update their records. Clients interview once a year at alternating recertifications, likely with different staff every time they recertify, and submit verification using the same self-service methods. Clients can speak with call center agents, office clerical staff, or partners for assistance.

Case maintenance. To view their benefit history or report changes to their household circumstances, clients log in to their online accounts or contact the call center. Online case maintenance is increasingly encouraged due to high volume at the call center. Clients struggling to resolve questions can request to speak with a supervisor in a local office or visit an assisted-service partner. Partners can access client information online with a client present and with signed permission. For complex questions, partners can contact their DCF liaison or call the call center themselves.

c. Partnering with Community Organizations

From the onset, to mitigate office closures and staff reductions, Florida's modernization plan called for developing a Community Partner Network to supplement access and support to clients. The partnership network was envisioned to provide clients access to self-service equipment, including computers, fax and photocopy machines, and telephones, as well as basic case assistance. The idea was for clients to be able to seek help in a convenient location from organizations they trust and may already patronize. Partnerships with DCF are formal and require a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and monitoring (Figure II.5).

Figure II.5. Summary of Partnerships with Community Organizations, Florida

Description of Activity	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Partners Conduct Outreach					▨	▨	▨	
Partners Offer Access to and/or Assistance with Application	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩
Partners Conduct Eligibility Interviews					▨	▨	▨	▨
Formal Contracts or MOUs	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩
Compensating Community Organizations	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨

Source: Information reported to Mathematica by the Florida DCF.

▨ Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation

▩ Initiative in statewide implementation

Partners provide one of three levels of service:[19]

1. **Information sites** offer basic information on SNAP and other ACCESS programs. They disseminate brochures and paper applications but lack the self-service equipment, such as computers with internet access, copy and/or fax machines, and telephones, available in storefronts and office lobbies.

2. **Self-service sites** offer self-service equipment but lack dedicated staff to provide assistance. A library is an example of a self-service site.

3. **Assisted-service sites** provide the highest level of service. Knowledgeable staff are available to provide assistance as needed. Some have self-service equipment for clients to

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[19] Service levels were initially designated as bronze, silver, or gold. The classifications were changed to be more meaningful to clients.

use on their own, while others sit with clients one-on-one at a computer and function in a case management role.

Some partner sites are open to the general population, while others, such as medical providers, offer services only to the customers they already serve. Clients may learn of partners through DCF's website, from handouts in storefronts or office lobbies, or by word of mouth. Organizations that enroll in the partnership network tend to have a mutual interest in partnering and an overlapping mission with DCF. Food banks, for example, are natural partners because they seek to increase food security. For many partners, SNAP is one more tool, in addition to other services such as counseling and employment training, they can draw upon to support their customers.

DCF's network of partners is extensive. As of March 2012, a total of 3,344 partners were enrolled, a one-third increase since September 2006.[20] Nearly three-quarters of all partners were assisted-service sites, and only eight percent were information sites. Only 75 partners (all assisted-service sites) received compensation. Regional directors decide whether to compensate select partners based on multiple factors including a lack of local offices in the area, community needs, and historical relationships.

Seven assisted-service sites were involved in an interview demonstration pilot project during the study period. The state received an FNS waiver permitting nonstate employees of selected partners to conduct face-to-face SNAP interviews. Interview partners received additional training and support from circuit-level staff, who also monitored them closely. According to a circuit administrator, the state's Quality Control team found that the partners performed better than, or as well as, eligibility workers on accuracy and timeliness measures.

Notably, Florida created a community partner liaison position in each circuit to support the partnership network.[21] At the time of this report, liaisons were responsible for educating the public about ACCESS programs, recruiting new partners, providing training and technical assistance, and monitoring. The degree of support and monitoring is based on the type of partner. Self-service sites receive minimal training and technical assistance, whereas assisted sites are required to participate in certain training and are often the most reliant on technical assistance. Based on interviews with partners, the level of support and assistance partners received from liaisons also appears to be driven by what individual partners request. Some partners reported contacting their liaisons several times a day and relied on liaisons to resolve specific client questions, while others contacted the call center or directed clients to do so. Monitoring was more standardized. Liaisons examined the number of applications partners submitted and conducted routine monthly visits to check that partners were upholding their commitment, such as maintaining a stock of informational materials and being open the hours they committed to in their agreement.

Florida also had agreements under which an organization provides half of the funding for a state worker. DCF hires, trains, and supervises these staff and covers the other half of the costs for the position. These workers can be outstationed at the organization's site or remain at a DCF

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[20] Mathematica calculations are based on data presented in Cody et al. (2008) and data provided by Florida DCF.

[21] Typically, liaisons initially worked under ACCESS operations administrators, who also oversaw supervisors and other frontline workers for ACCESS programs. In 2011, DCF created a new community development unit for each circuit, moving ACCESS liaisons out of ACCESS operations.

location. These arrangements were mainly with medical or mental health providers that benefitted from help completing Medicaid applications on behalf of their customers. DCF was planning to modify the funding structure to a fee-for-service model and expand the program in 2012.

d.　Policy Simplification

DCF staff noted the importance of simplifying policies for reducing burden on staff and improving access and error rates. As one administrator stated, "Every chance we get, we try to simplify." Eligibility determination policies began changing in 2002 and have continued to change during modernization to further capture worker efficiencies (Figure II.6). Staff sought to eliminate requests for duplicate information or for verification documents that had no impact on error rates, which decreased burden on workers and clients. Other eligibility simplifications included broad-based categorical eligibility and the exclusion of certain incomes or assets. Florida also introduced a Combined Application Project with the Social Security Administration, known in Florida as SUNCAP. Clients enrolled through SUNCAP participate in SNAP without completing a separate application. Although SUNCAP was not introduced as part of DCF's modernization efforts, DCF does not need to verify information obtained through SUNCAP, as it already has been verified in the SSI eligibility process. This reduces the amount of verification clients must send and workers must process. Expanding data exchanges similarly helped to reduce required verification.

Florida also altered policies and procedures around interviews. The state pursued a waiver of face-to-face interviews, permitting all clients to interview by telephone. This meant that clients were no longer required to travel to local offices. In turn, this helped to facilitate telecommuting and changed interactions between clients and staff. In addition, most interviews were initially shortened from around one hour to approximately 10 minutes and were referred to as "abbreviated" or "green-track" interviews. Longer, or "red-track," interviews were reserved for applicants identified in the abbreviated interview as having a higher risk of payment errors, such as when their household expenses exceed their reported income (Cody et al. 2008). Some circuits have dropped the distinction between green- and red-track interviews since initial statewide implementation and instead conduct a single interview for all clients, with additional questions for more complex cases.

Figure II.6. Summary of Policy Changes, Florida
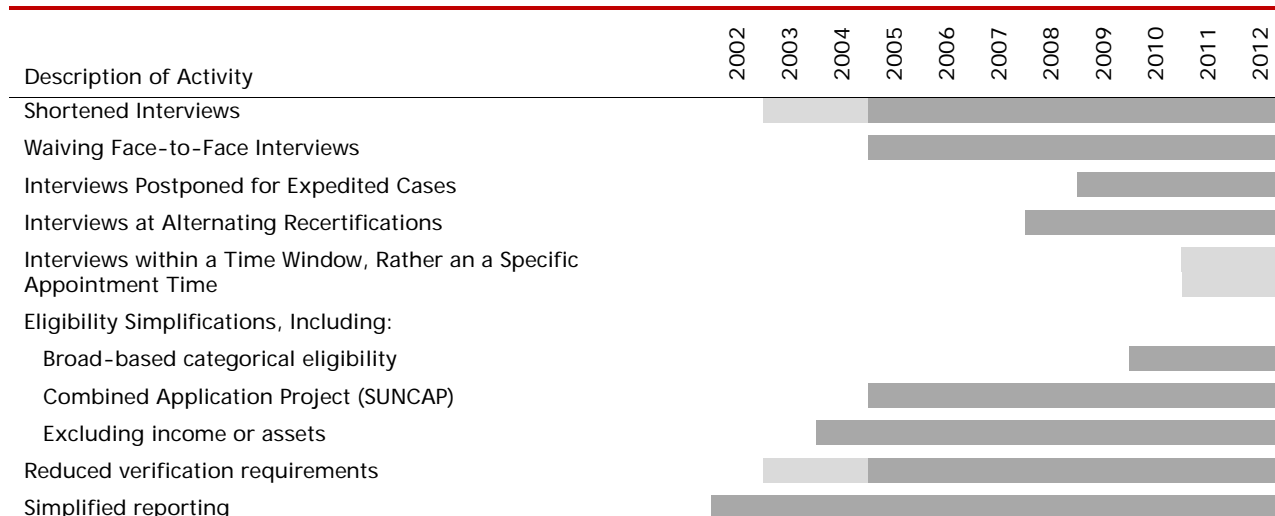
Description of Activity	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Shortened Interviews			▨	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
Waiving Face-to-Face Interviews				▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
Interviews Postponed for Expedited Cases							▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
Interviews at Alternating Recertifications						▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
Interviews within a Time Window, Rather an a Specific Appointment Time										▨	▨
Eligibility Simplifications, Including:											
Broad-based categorical eligibility									▪	▪	▪
Combined Application Project (SUNCAP)				▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
Excluding income or assets			▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
Reduced verification requirements			▨	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
Simplified reporting	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪	▪

Source:　　Information reported to Mathematica by the Florida DCF.

▨ Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation
▪ Initiative in statewide implementation

B. Changes in Outcomes Following Modernization

In Florida, SNAP applications and participation climbed sharply during the study period (2000–2011), with access improving overall, and the number of elderly and disabled individuals on the caseload doubling. Clients frequently used new methods to access benefits, including online and from a partner site. The state experienced improved outcomes in both administrative costs and payment errors since 2000. Clients reported that they were generally satisfied with the modernized system of benefit delivery, although some problems related to understanding the process and accessing staff by telephone in times of high demand remain. This section reviews trends in key outcomes; Appendix B contains detailed tables.

1. Client Access and Satisfaction

a. SNAP Participation and Growth Rates

Florida experienced tremendous growth in SNAP participation during the past decade. By December 2011, 1.8 million households (3.3 million individuals) were enrolled, a four-fold increase from 2000 (a 266 percent increase in individuals). Participation was, on balance, roughly level until the economic recession. Spurred by dismal economic conditions, the number of individuals receiving SNAP grew 153 percent between 2004 and 2011.[22] In 2010, 1 in 6 Floridians were living below the poverty level, 1 in 9 were unemployed, and 2.79 million were receiving SNAP benefits in an average month (Figure II.7).

Figure II.7. Trends in Monthly Average Number of SNAP Recipients and Economic Indicators, 2000–2011, Florida
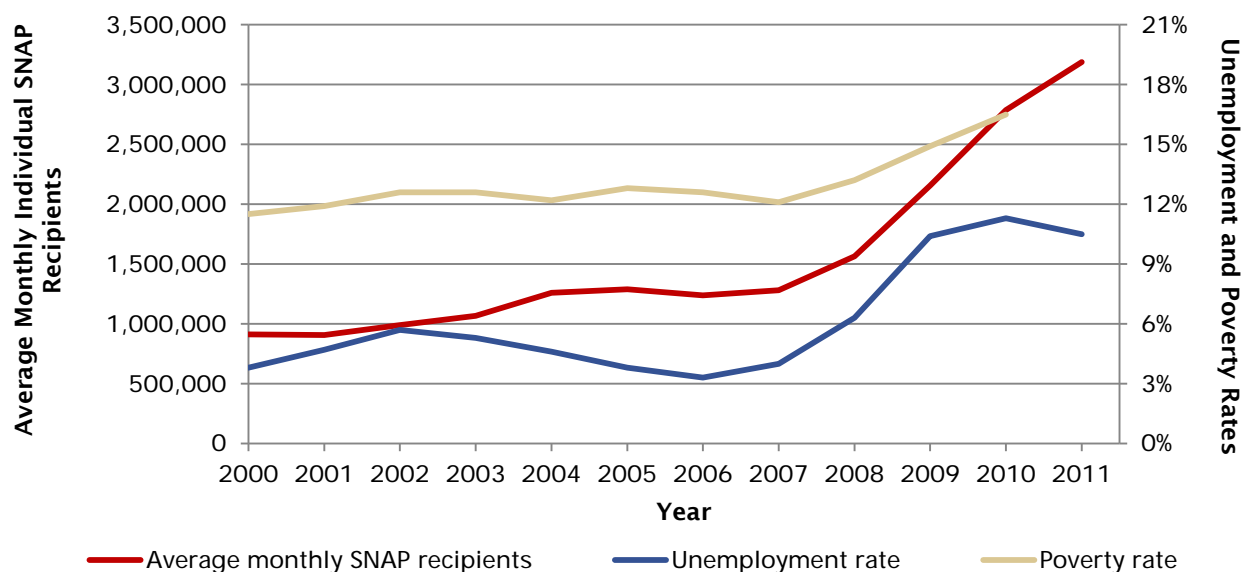
Sources: Participation is based on Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF. Unemployment rates are from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Poverty rates are from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Briefs.

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[22] Severe hurricanes and tropical storms in 2004 and 2005, including Hurricane Katrina, contributed to increases in participation in those years.

Access to SNAP improved since 2005, fulfilling one of Florida's modernization goals. The state's PAI, which indicates the proportion of low-income people who enroll in SNAP, increased from 0.41 in 2005 to 0.68 in 2010 (Figure II.8). Initiatives designed to make SNAP more accessible to eligible individuals, such as the partnership network and telephone interviews, might have played a role in participation growth. The access index in Florida improved from 44th to 34th in the nation. The index improved more quickly beginning in 2008, commensurate with participation growth. This trend was also seen across the nation.

Figure II.8. Trends in SNAP Program Access Index, 2005- 2010, Florida
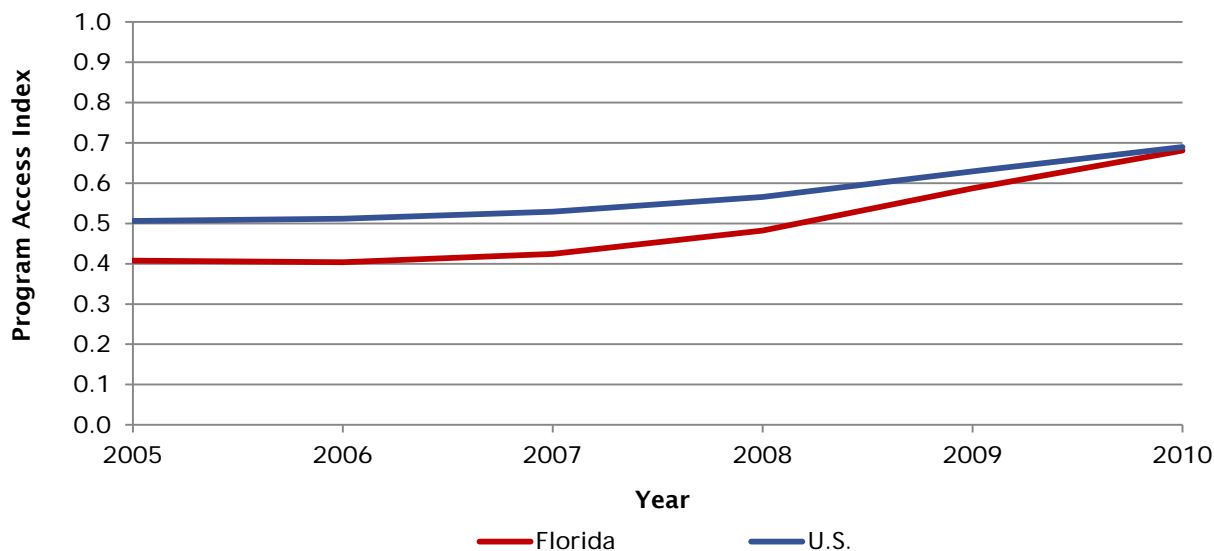
Source: PAI data are from the USDA FNS.

Notes: PAI, a measure calculated by FNS, represents a ratio of the average monthly number of SNAP participants over the course of a calendar year to the number of state residents with income below 125 percent of the federal poverty level. A higher PAI indicates greater program access.

Regardless of the causes behind the recent participation growth, SNAP participation at this scale makes the case for modernization. While DCF officials could not have imagined that caseloads would nearly triple between 2004 and the end of 2011, the initial changes they put in place—including restructuring staff functions, employing new technology, and changing policies—were also necessary to help reduce burdens on workers in later years and allow them to process the additional applications and maintain the higher caseload. As discussed earlier, state staff at all levels recognized more could still be done and have continued to look for ways to further streamline processes.

SNAP participation grew faster in urban counties than rural ones. Between 2000 and 2011, caseloads had tripled in rural counties and quadrupled in urban ones. There was also much variation at the regional level. The Southern region, which encompasses Miami, experienced the least growth, while caseloads grew the most in the SunCoast region (home to Ft. Myers).[23]

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[23] DCF grouped counties into "regions" in state FY 2008. To calculate regional growth rates in earlier years, counties were assigned to their current regional designation.

Joblessness during the recession precipitated a greater need for food assistance among working adults. Perhaps for this reason, participation among households headed by elderly or disabled individuals grew consistently throughout the past decade but by less than other groups.[24] It is unclear whether emphasizing self-service—in particular, encouraging clients to manage their cases online and communicate by telephone, without the help of an assigned caseworker—was a barrier for certain demographic populations. The number of heads of households 60 or older doubled since many initiatives were implemented in 2005. This growth was eclipsed by other age groups, possibly because the income of older adults was less affected by the recession (Figure II.9). The same trend was apparent among heads of households with disabilities. Their growth was sizable (about 130 percent since 2005), but slower than nondisabled recipients. The proportion of heads of households who are Hispanic has remained relatively constant, while in terms of numbers, they have grown 156 percent since 2005.

Figure II.9. Changes in Characteristics of Heads of SNAP Household in Florida, 2000–2011
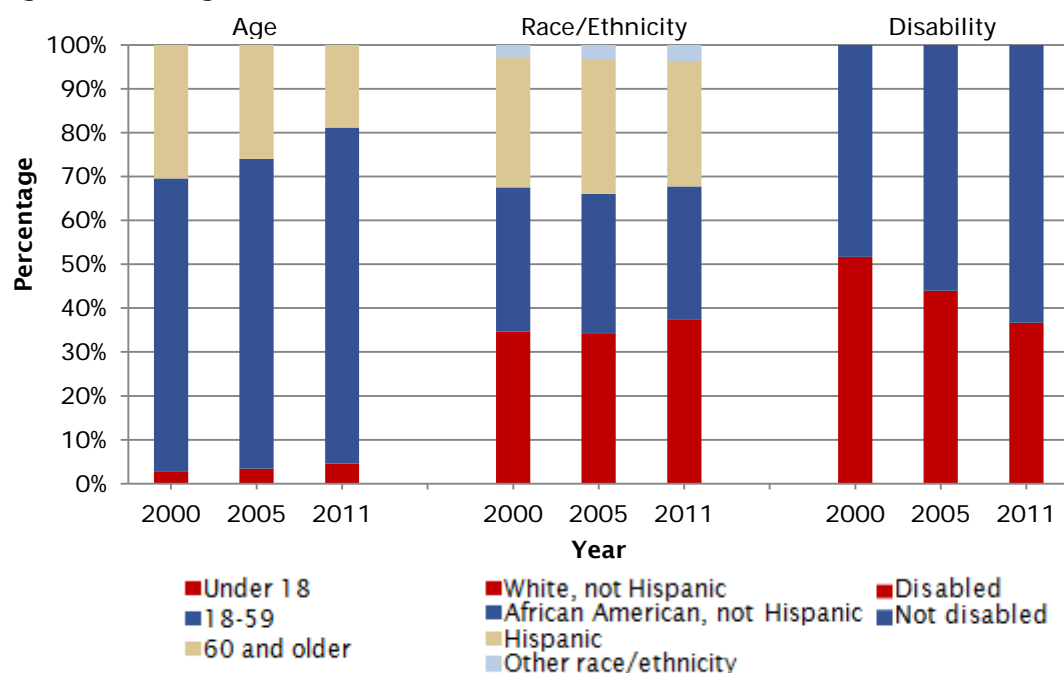
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Note: Data represent heads of households. Historical data at the individual level are unavailable in Florida.

b. Application Submissions

Consistent with caseload growth, the number of SNAP applications submitted to DCF began escalating in 2008 (Figure II.10).[25] In 2011, DCF received approximately 121,000 initial applications per month, more than twice as many as in 2005, when many modernization changes were first

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[24] Client demographics in Florida represent heads of households only. Historical data at the individual level are unavailable in Florida.

[25] Application data represent initial applications and recertifications.

implemented. In comparison, applications rose only 15 percent between 2001 and 2004. Since application increases coincided with the recession, the extent to which improved access due to modernization contributed to this trend is unclear. Regardless, application submissions on this scale make it clear that minimizing burden on existing workers through efficiency-oriented initiatives was necessary.

Figure II.10. Applications Processed per Month, 2001–2011, Florida
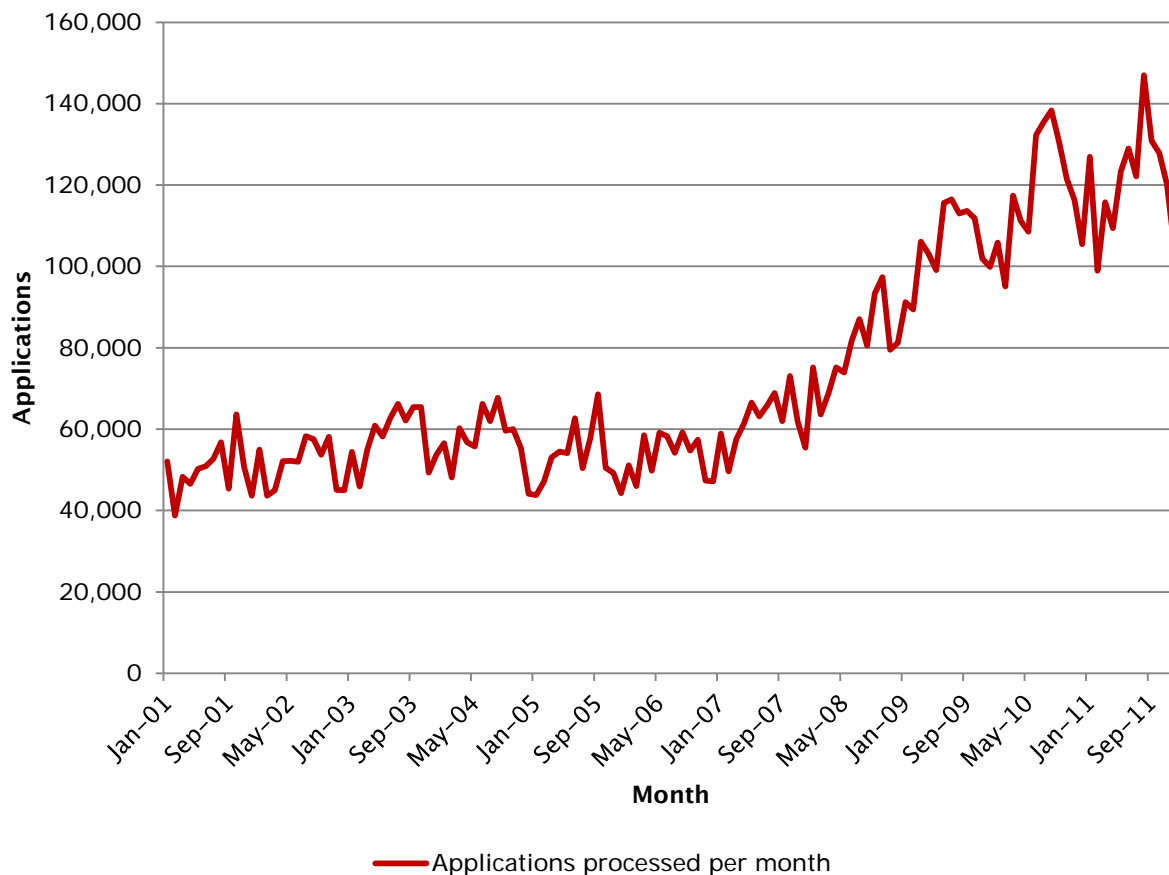
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Approval rates for new applications increased throughout the study period, rising from 65 percent in January 2001 to 84 percent in December 2011, with a temporary increase occurring between late 2004 and early 2006 followed by a gradual increase from 2006 to 2011 (Figure II.11). Although greater and more persistent economic need for food assistance likely played a large role, it is also possible the online eligibility screening tool reduced applications from those less likely to be eligible following its release in 2007.

In 2011, approval rates were highest for those applying via the intranet from a computer in a SNAP office (90 percent) followed by those who applied from a partner site (86 percent). The most common application method, applying online from a location other than a SNAP office or partner site, had an approval rate of 82 percent in 2011. These trends have persisted since 2010 (Figure II.12). Lower approval rates for online applications not submitted at a SNAP office or partner site could indicate that those who travel to a partner or local office face greater need or more readily obtain assistance that helps them through the process. It is also possible that, for those with online access, the ease of applying encourages more applications from those who are borderline eligible.

Figure II.11. Approval Rate of SNAP Applications by Month, 2001–2011, Florida
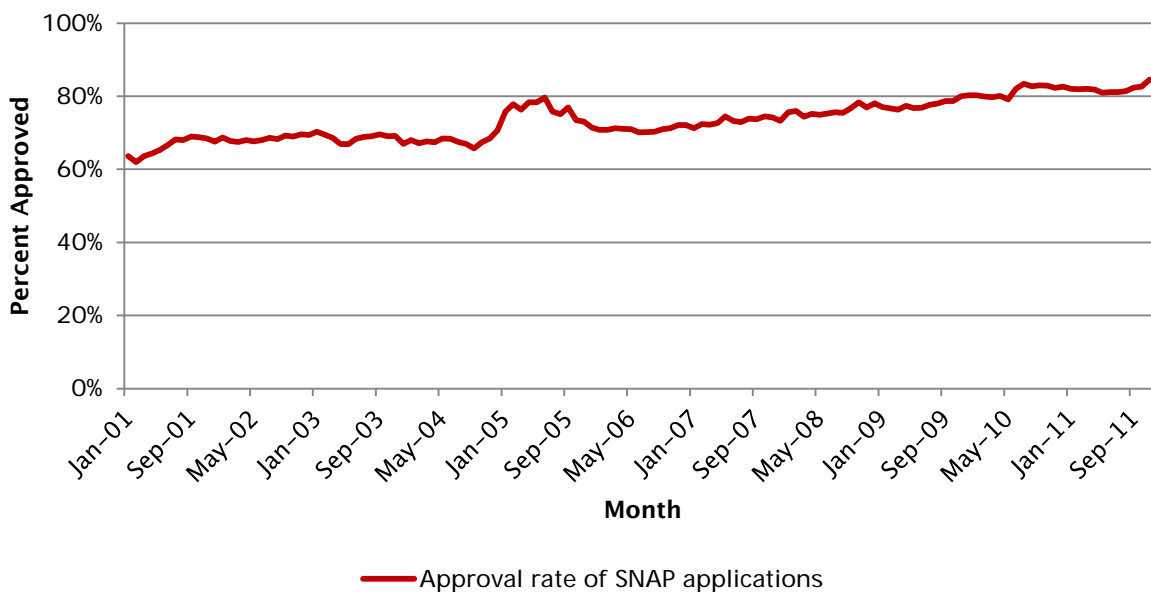
Figure II.12. Approval Rate of SNAP Applications by Method, 2009–2011, Florida
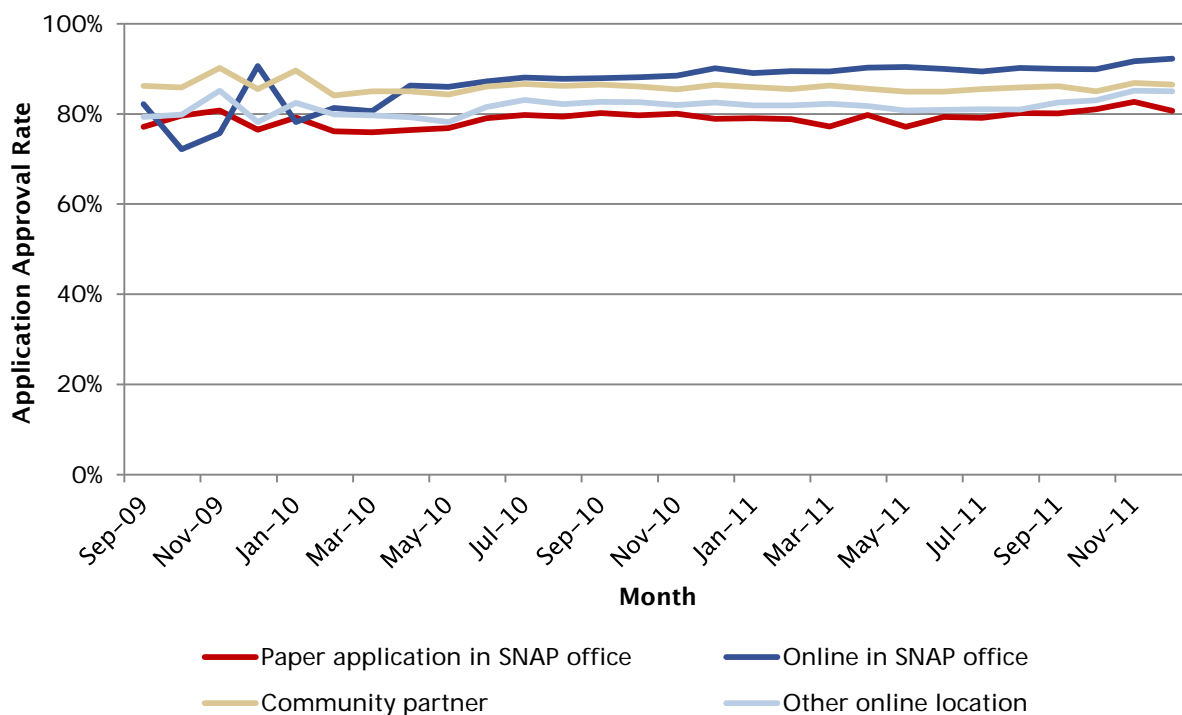
Application timeliness rates—the proportion of applications processed within 30 days of receipt for regular applicants and 7 days for expedited applicants (as required by federal law)—wavered somewhat throughout the past decade in conjunction with changes in the number of applications submitted. The proportion of timely applications fell from 85 percent beginning in 2005 to a low of

60 percent in late 2008 before increasing to almost 90 percent in 2011 (Figure II.13). Timeliness rates were similar for paper and online applications.

Figure II.13. Average SNAP Application Processing Time and Timeliness, 2001–2011, Florida
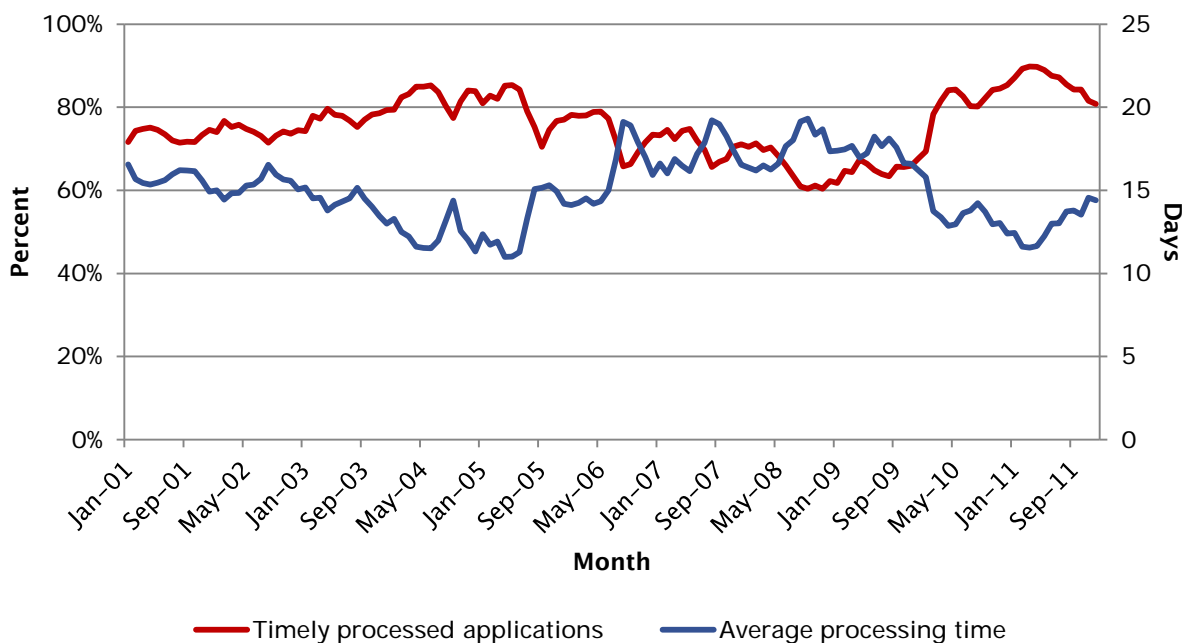
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Note: Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files. The results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application data provided do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications are included in our calculation of timeliness. Applications are considered timely if eligibility determinations are made within 7 days for expedited applications and 30 days for all other applications.

The time required to process applications followed the same pattern. It took an average of 12 days to process an application in 2004, 18 days in 2008, and 14 days in 2010. Most applications (54.5 percent in 2011), however, were processed within the first week of the thirty day determination period. Since 2004, an increasing proportion of applications were processed in the last week, rising from 10.5 percent in 2004 to almost 18 percent in 2011.

One way states can reduce some of the burden of processing applications is to reduce churning, which is defined as immediate reenrollment in the program after benefits are discontinued. Churning can indicate that clients needed continued benefits but were unable to recertify in time. Between 2006 and 2009, 14 to 22 percent of eligible applications were submitted by households whose SNAP benefits had elapsed for only one month before reenrolling. One-month reenrollments subsequently climbed to about 30 percent by late 2011 (Figure II.14). The state attributes the churning increase to

a federal policy change unrelated to modernization and reports that churning declined in 2012 after DCF altered its procedures for implementing the policy.[26]

Figure II.14. Trends in SNAP Reenrollment, 2000–2011, Florida
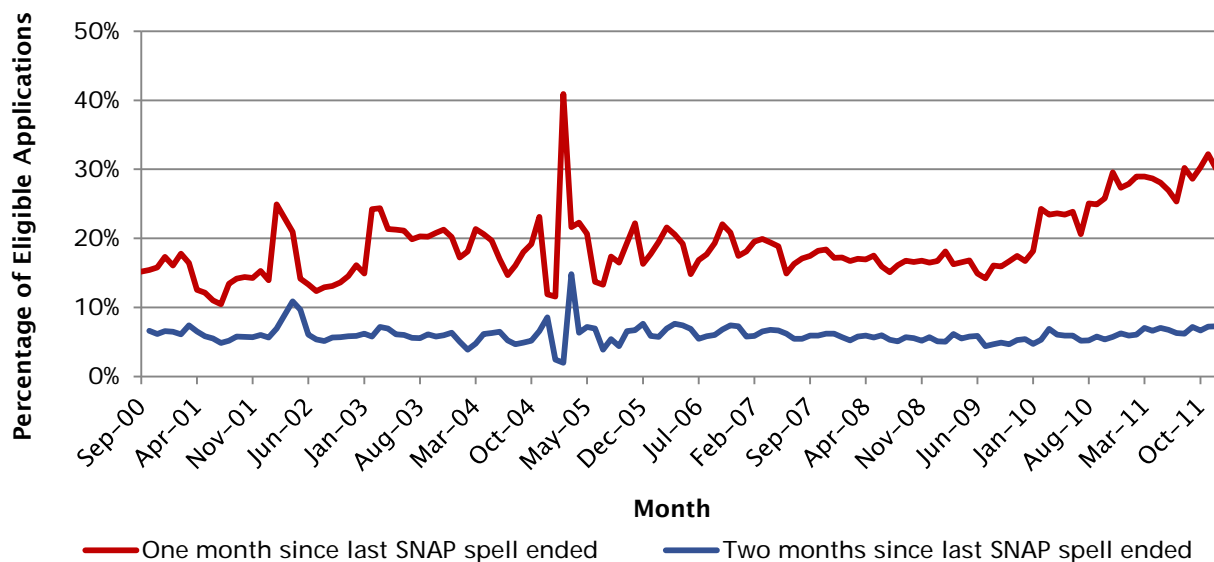
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Note: Percentages are based on the number of households that enrolled in the given month. For instance, 18 percent of those who enrolled in January 2006 had previously received SNAP benefits in November 2005, but did not receive benefits in December 2005. Households that stop receiving SNAP benefits and later enroll again are counted again as a new enrollment.

Another seven percent of new enrollees had received SNAP benefits two months before reenrolling. If they had stayed enrolled, they would have submitted recertification forms instead of new applications, which would have been faster for clients to submit and workers to process, while ensuring clients in need were not without food assistance.

c.   Client Use of New Points of Contact

Florida created three new points of contact for clients to apply, recertify, submit verification, report changes, and seek answers to questions: the online system, call center, and partnership network. We discuss data available on client use of these contact points below, along with reports from staff and clients. In sum, the online system and call center were highly utilized; the call center faced challenges due to high volume. Use of partners was unclear.

Online system. DCF strongly encourages clients to apply online and self-serve through their online account, and the data bear this out. In 2011, there were roughly 30,000 unique visitors a day

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[26] According to a DCF official, FNS's policy regarding SNAP recertifications changed in late 2009 or early 2010 to give clients an extra 30 days to complete required actions. Initially, if a client submitted a recertification form but did not complete his or her interview (if required) or submit documentation, DCF closed the case on the last day of the client's eligibility period and reopened the case if a client fulfilled requirements within 30 days. Closing cases automatically generated case closure notices to clients. In response, clients tended to submit a new initial application, rather than completing outstanding actions. DCF changed their procedures in late 2011 to leave cases open pending client actions, rather than closing and reopening cases.

to the online system's home page. Online applications comprised at least 70 percent of all submissions in 2006, the year following its introduction (Figure II.15). Use of online methods has grown every year since, and by 2011, approximately 90 percent of all applications were submitted online.[27]

Figure II.15. Percentage of SNAP Applications Submitted Online and on Paper, 2006–2011, Florida
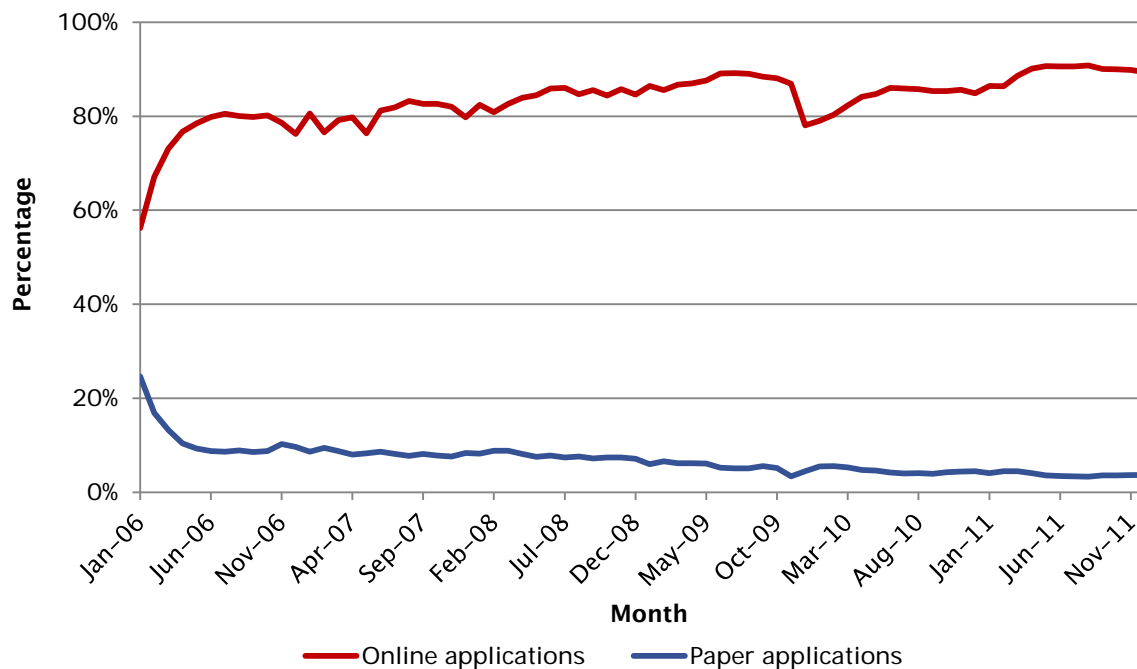
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Note: Paper applications include those that were submitted by mail or fax, or that were dropped off at a local office. Online applications include those submitted from the internet by applicants or community partners, or from the intranet on SNAP office computers. Other methods of submission not shown include SUNCAP and telephone applications.

SNAP recipients increasingly used their online accounts to check their benefits, report a change, apply for additional assistance, and upload documents. Checking benefit amounts was by far the most common reason for logging into an account. In 2011, the webpage for checking benefits received 3.6 million hits per month on average, up from 2.2 million hits in 2009, the year following its introduction (Figure II.16). The same year, clients reported approximately 51,400 changes online in an average month, and submitted 38,100 electronic requests for additional assistance programs (Figure II.17). Clients have quickly taken to using their account to submit verification. In December 2011, four months after its introduction, clients uploaded 31,160 documents. It is no surprise that DCF staff cited the online system as one of the state's most significant modernization changes. In addition to improving access, online tools increase client self-sufficiency, in turn reducing call volume and staff workload.

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[27] The number of online applications discussed here includes applications submitted through the intranet at local offices as well as online applications submitted by community partners. According to staff, online applications account for around 95 percent of all applications.

Figure II.16. Monthly Website Hits to Online Account for Checking Benefits, 2009–2011, Florida
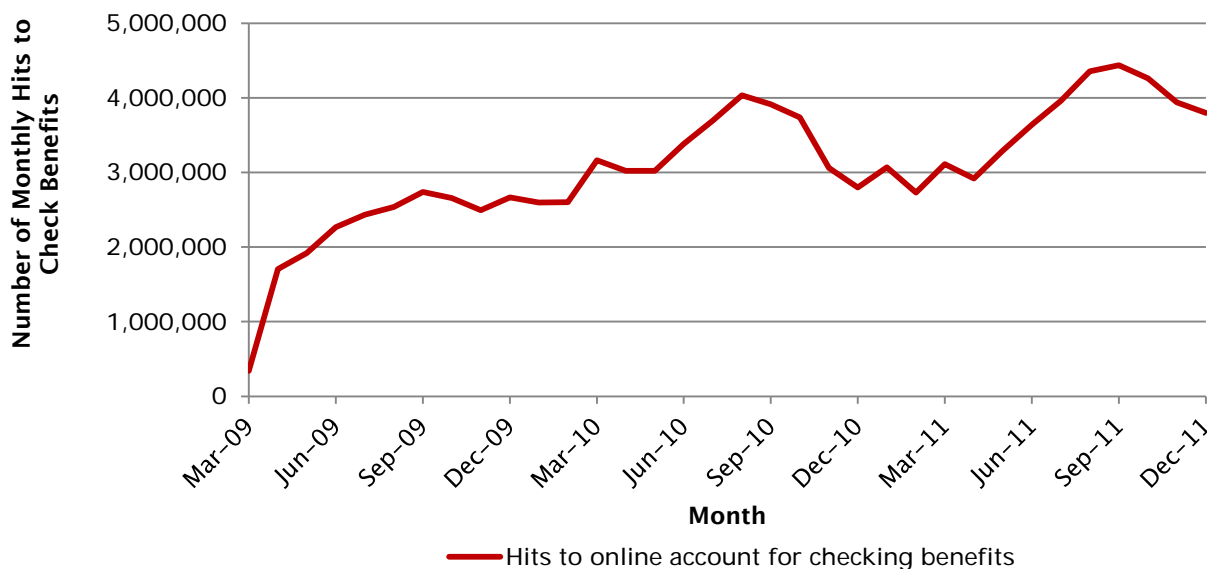
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Figure II.17. Use of Online Account for Reporting Changes, Applying for Additional Assistance, and Uploading Documents, 2010–2011, Florida
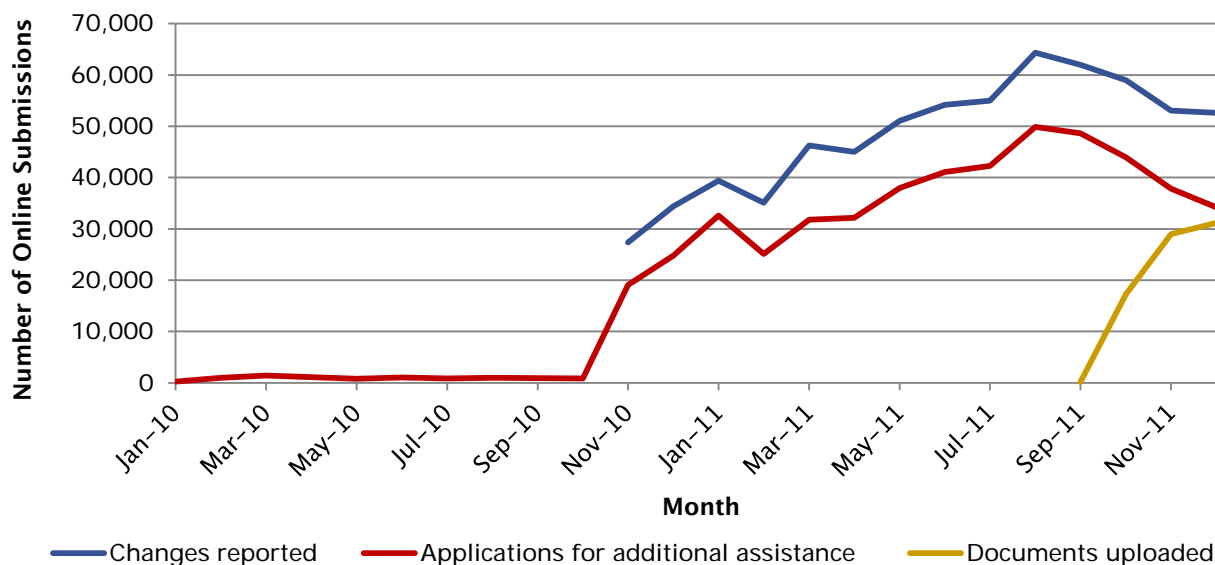
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

In general, those with language or cultural barriers, minimal computer skills or access, or low literacy may face more difficulty accessing online tools. These barriers may be more pronounced in rural areas. Some staff questioned whether modernization works well in rural areas where residents do not typically own a computer or know how to use one, and do not understand the self-service features, including client accounts. There are also fewer rural partners to go to for help. Nevertheless, data indicate that residents in rural counties were about as likely to apply online as their urban counterparts.

Call center. Client use of the call center increased to substantial levels as participation grew. Data available since 2008 clearly show that demand significantly outpaced the call center's capacity, despite gaining an additional 30 staff members between 2009 and 2011. Indeed, one state official characterized the call center as the state's "Achilles' heel." Clients wishing to speak with an agent must connect to the IVR, and then connect to a queue for an agent.[28] Connecting at either juncture emerged as a key issue. DCF added extra telephone lines into the IVR in January 2012 to accommodate the growth in volume. Before then, around 30 percent of callers in 2011 heard a busy signal before ever reaching the IVR (of 237,300 attempted calls per day), compared to 10 percent in 2010 (of 143,300 calls attempted per day) (Figure II.18).[29] In 2011, calls to the IVR were up 330 percent from summer 2006, and the number of monthly calls outnumbered active SNAP cases nearly 3 to 1.[30]

Figure II.18. Daily Calls to IVR and Success in Reaching IVR, 2009–2011, Florida
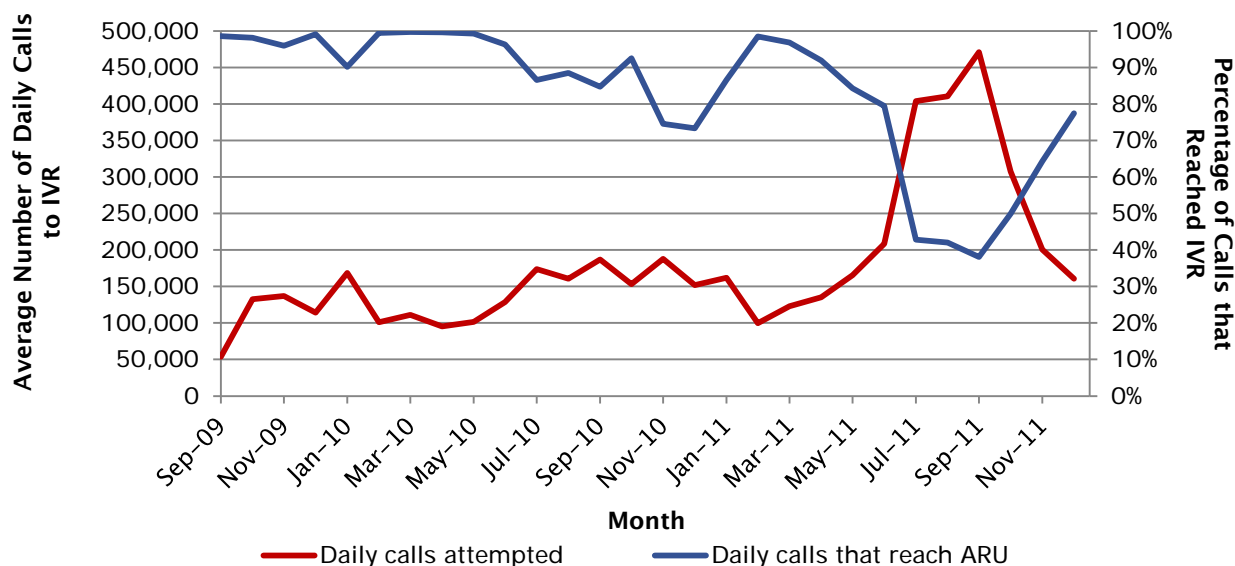
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Note: The IVR is accessible seven days a week, and the call center operates on business days. For consistency, daily call rates to the IVR are based on the number of business days in a month.

In addition to the challenge faced in getting through to the IVR, clients also faced difficulty in reaching an agent. Since 2008, around 60 percent (86,700 daily calls in 2011) of those who were able to connect to the IVR attempted to speak with an agent, usually without success. Most (71,350 daily calls or 82 percent in 2011) were disconnected before reaching a call center agent or terminated the call while on hold (Figure II.19). The problem was no doubt exacerbated when callers who were

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[28] At the time of this report, clients were transferred from the IVR to a queue for a particular call center, and then to a queue for an agent within that call center. Thus, clients had to get through to a call center line before waiting for an agent. DCF was planning to eliminate this intermediate juncture so that clients could directly transfer to a queue for an agent at any of the call center locations.

[29] The IVR is accessible 7 days a week and the call center operates on business days. For consistency, daily call rates to the IVR are based on the number of business days in a month.

[30] Data from 2006 were reported in Cody et al. (2008).

disconnected called back. Clients fared only slightly better in the past three years. Although average hold times were only 15 minutes in 2011, staff and clients reported significantly longer hold times during peak hours, particularly on Mondays, days after holidays, and lunch times.[31] Similar to past years, calls lasted seven minutes, on average, in 2011.

Figure II.19. Call Center Performance, 2008–2011, Florida
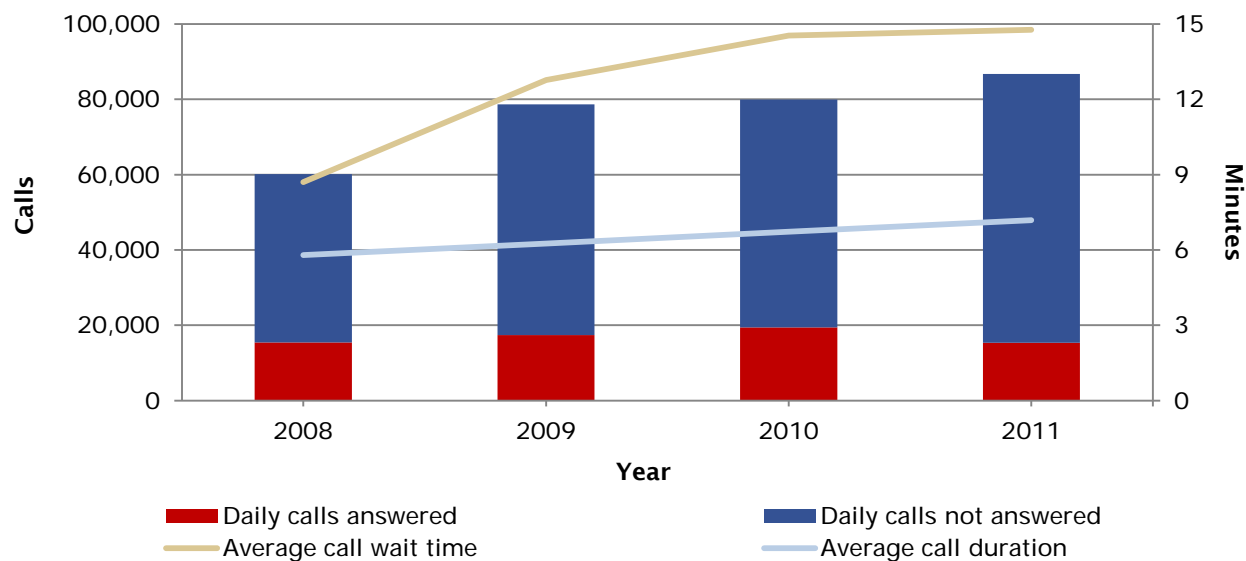
The proportion of callers opting to speak with an agent suggests that most questions were too complex for the IVR or callers were calling for other purposes, such as to complete an interview. Call center agents completed 23 percent of interviews conducted in 2011. These patterns are consistent with reports from focus group respondents that the IVR did not answer their questions and most of the time they needed to speak with an agent.

Community partners. The extent to which clients seek information, self-service equipment, or assistance from DCF's network of 3,344 community partners, the third major new contact point, is unclear. Although data on the number of clients who visit a partner for any form of assistance are unavailable, the number of applications received via partner sites provides a minimum estimate of client use. Overall, partners accounted for a small but growing proportion of all applications: seven percent in 2011, up from less than one percent in 2006.[32]

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[31] At the time of the study period, Florida was planning to introduce a "virtual hold" feature permitting clients to leave their telephone number and receive a call back, rather than waiting on hold.

[32] Self-service and assisted-site partners submit online applications via a unique URL, which DCF uses to track the applications originating at partner sites. Florida also tracks the number of applications partners send via other electronic means, such as email. According to ACCESS liaisons, it is not uncommon for computers at partner sites to inadvertently reset URLs, in which case applications submitted could not be tracked. Thus, data presented here on submissions via partners is possibly an underestimate.

d.   Client Satisfaction

Focus groups with SNAP participants and eligible nonparticipants, as well as interviews with staff and community partners, highlighted both positive and negative client reactions to SNAP modernization. In general, clients in Florida appeared satisfied with the state's modernized system. However, some clients struggled with the application and eligibility process, and issues related to high demand persisted.

Respondents identified key benefits of modernization in Florida, as follows:

- **Clients appeared satisfied with the convenience of modernized operations.** Many clients appreciated that they no longer had to travel to or wait at a local office to apply. Overall, focus group SNAP participants with access to the internet found the online application convenient and experienced few difficulties. As one respondent said, "It's easy, it's convenient, [you] don't have to run all over, especially if you have Internet access at home."

- **Clients are able to obtain assistance through a few avenues.** Some clients who were not comfortable using computers reported that they were able to obtain assistance applying online from friends or a local office. Likewise, some participants reported lending help to others, and one even reported helping those she encounters at the library, a common self-service partner. Indeed, the large statewide network of formal partners offers great potential to assist clients, particularly clients with low English literacy or computer skills. A partner organization in Miami that targets an immigrant group reported that their customers prefer seeking help in the community. Their customers felt that they were mistreated in local offices and left with a misunderstanding of the program. Some Spanish-speaking focus group respondents in Miami also perceived language barriers with local office staff.

- **Interview partners may be an important resource.** Similarly, staff at two partner sites that target non-English speaking communities suggested that interview partners may be particularly helpful for immigrant populations, as well as other clients who need greater assistance, have difficulty following up for their interview, or have a general distrust of government agencies.

- **Application and certification processes did not appear to strike clients as too time-consuming.** In general, clients reported it took about an hour to complete an application and a half hour to complete a recertification. Interviews were short, lasting only around 10 minutes.

Nonetheless, several challenges from the client's perspective also emerged:

- **Clients and staff alike reported that reaching workers by telephone was among the state's biggest ongoing challenges.** Difficulty reaching call center agents or local offices for an interview or general questions was a source of much client dissatisfaction. As with the call center, demand outpaced the capacity of telephone systems in local offices and available staff. As one respondent stated, "Trying to reach [the call center] over the phone to actually do the interview is very, very... I mean you might be calling a whole week, two weeks, and you're not getting [through]." Consistent with staff reports, some respondents reported getting disconnected and others waited on hold for hours: "You can be on the phone for hours just holding the phone." At worst, clients feared

that failure to reach a worker for an interview would result in denial of benefits. Respondents in Miami who reported that staff called them for an interview generally had no complaints about this arrangement, although others in Miami who interviewed in person also reported waiting a few hours.

- **Understanding basic eligibility rules and application questions may be a challenge for some.** Many focus group respondents, particularly eligible nonparticipants, lacked understanding of basic eligibility rules, and answering application questions presented a challenge. Spanish-speaking respondents appeared to exhibit the most confusion.

- **Based on reports from staff and partners, the language used in client notices may be too complex for some clients, and translations may be of poor quality.** Eligibility workers in one office reported using free translation software to translate key pieces of text, even for more common languages such as Spanish and Creole. One partner reported that translations in notifications were "incomprehensible."

- **Some clients may not be aware of the partnership network.** Spanish-speaking participants and eligible nonparticipants in one focus group were unsure where to go for help other than SNAP offices. Respondents in another focus group reported seeking access through partners or knew where help was available in the community, although they were not necessarily aware the organizations had formal relationships with DCF.

- **Community partners supplement assistance formerly provided by eligibility workers but are not a replacement.** Partners are not trained in eligibility procedures and so cannot offer the same degree of assistance in interpreting application questions or accounting for extenuating circumstances. For example, one partner we visited was uncertain whether a client who works occasionally as a day laborer is considered "employed." Nor can they answer questions related to eligibility determinations, such as helping clients understand why they were denied or why their case was pending. For complex questions such as these, partners reach out to their liaison, call the call center, or have clients call the call center.

- **Maintaining account log-in information is difficult for some.** Clients and partners reiterated that keeping track of log-in information to gain access to the online account was a common challenge, especially for those who face greater day-to-day struggles.

2. Payment Error Rates

Reducing error rates was one of Florida's principal modernization objectives. The state's annual payment error rate decreased substantially over time, with an uneven decline in negative error rates. Notably, both error rates declined since 2007, despite significant caseload growth. Payment error represents the proportion of clients awarded benefits higher or lower than their household circumstances warranted, while negative error represents the proportion of denials that were wrong.[33]

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[33] Inaccurate payment amounts must be off by a certain threshold to be considered an error, unless a client is found to be ineligible. The threshold was $50 in FY 2011 and varied in past years.

Florida's annual payment error rate declined precipitously since 2000, from 9.4 to 0.8 percent in 2010 (92 percent) (Figure II.20). The decline began in 2003 and, after a two-year increase between 2005 and 2006 as many modernization reforms were first implemented, quickly declined until leveling off at less than one percent.

Figure II.20. Trends in SNAP QC Payment Error Rate, 2000–2010, Florida
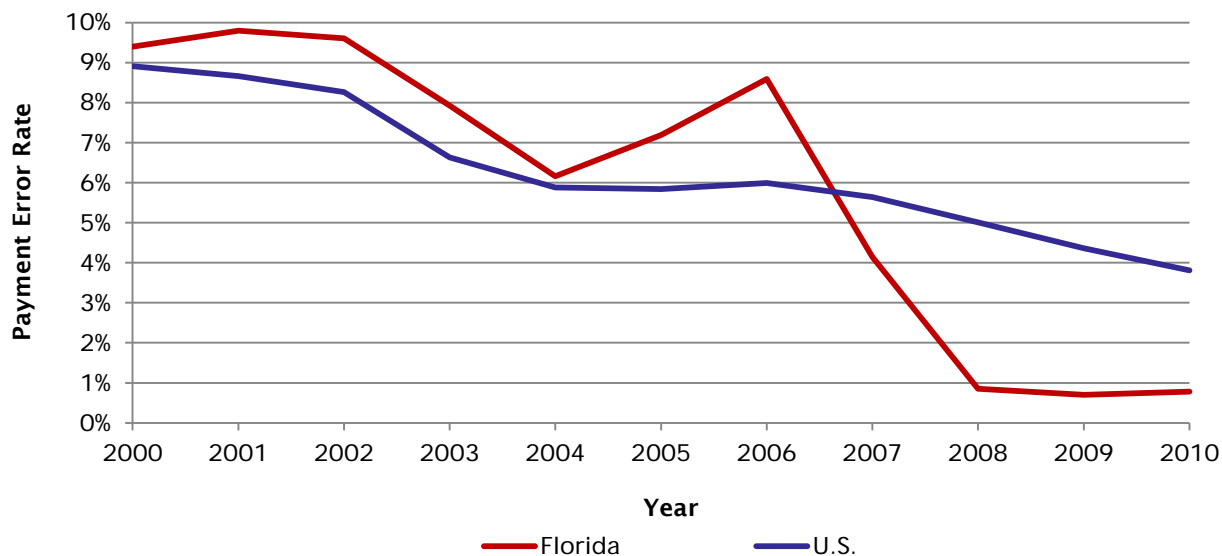
Unlike the payment error rate, Florida's negative error rate fluctuated (Figure II.21). After declining from 14 in 2003 to about 3 percent between 2004 through 2006, the state's negative error rate peaked at 20 percent in 2007. In other words, one in five SNAP applicants who were denied benefits in 2007 were wrongfully denied. Negative error rates declined in subsequent years, despite increasing caseloads. By 2010, six percent of denied applicants were wrongfully denied benefits.

Staff described possible ways in which specific modernization reforms lowered error rates. In particular, policy changes and expanded data exchanges have likely helped reduce error. Simplifying policies and reducing documentation requirements in turn reduced opportunities for workers to commit an error. As mentioned above, Florida attempted to eliminate unnecessary procedures or policies, including those that could contribute to error. Expanding data exchanges helped the state further reduce documentation requirements. As one administrator observed, "We hardly verify anything at all now." Another characterized their policies as a "well-oiled machine," with clear rules to follow.

Figure II.21. Trends in SNAP QC Negative Error Rate, 2000–2010, Florida
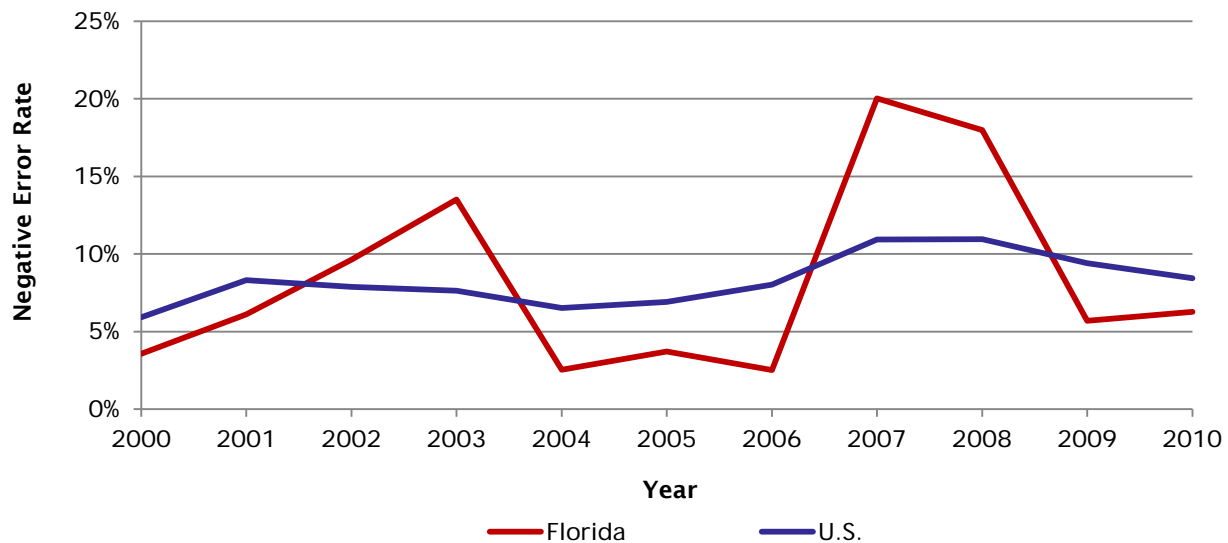
Implementing QMS software also helped reduce error rates. Senior eligibility workers used QMS to conduct case reviews, in which they double-checked the accuracy of eligibility determinations. Supervisors and administrators could quickly examine case review data in QMS to identify error trends, which helps inform pre-service or ongoing training needs. Similarly, the state-level quality assurance team used QMS to monitor statewide performance, especially after big changes were implemented. They also looked for error-prone trends to help inform statewide policy changes.

Dedicating a staff position for case reviews also may have helped improve error rates. Senior eligibility workers who serve as designated reviewers review cases in nearly "real time" to catch mistakes early; they also mentor processors on mistakes they find and help inform training needs.

Staff specialization may have also contributed to reductions in error rates. Focusing on a single task allows workers to become more proficient and faster at a particular skill. If a single initiative (or combination of initiatives) saved workers time and helped them manage increasingly large caseloads, it could have also reduced error.

Other factors may have contributed to an increase in error rates. Staff might commit errors in the short run while adjusting to a change. In addition, at least one regional administrator felt that caseloads were so overwhelming that the speed required to manage work inevitably led to errors.

3.   Administrative Costs

As discussed earlier, DCF began to modernize after the state legislature ordered the agency to significantly reduce administrative costs. For the most part, cost savings were realized through reductions in force and office closures. The state focused on closing offices where it would help achieve financial savings. By 2012, DCF incurred a net loss of 78 offices (54 percent) but had increased spending on technology.

Florida's total spending on administrative costs declined every year between FYs 2004 and 2007, after reforms were implemented but before the brunt of caseload growth. By 2007, costs were nearly one-fourth their 2000 levels (Figure II.22).[34] Costs have risen somewhat since then, likely driven by caseload increases. By FY 2011, total administrative costs were 9 percent higher than FY 2007, but overall, 17 percent lower than FY 2000. This amounts to a net savings of 19.8 million dollars between FYs 2000 and 2011 (adjusted for inflation to 2005 dollars).

Notably, savings were mostly maintained despite significant caseload growth. Furthermore, as Figure II.22 also illustrates, Florida successfully cut costs over the past decade, while costs increased nationally. Florida also achieved larger cost reductions compared to other states in the Southeast region (17 versus 3 percent).

Figure II.22 Percentage Change in Total SNAP Administrative Costs from 2000 Baseline, 2000–2011, Florida (2005 Dollars)
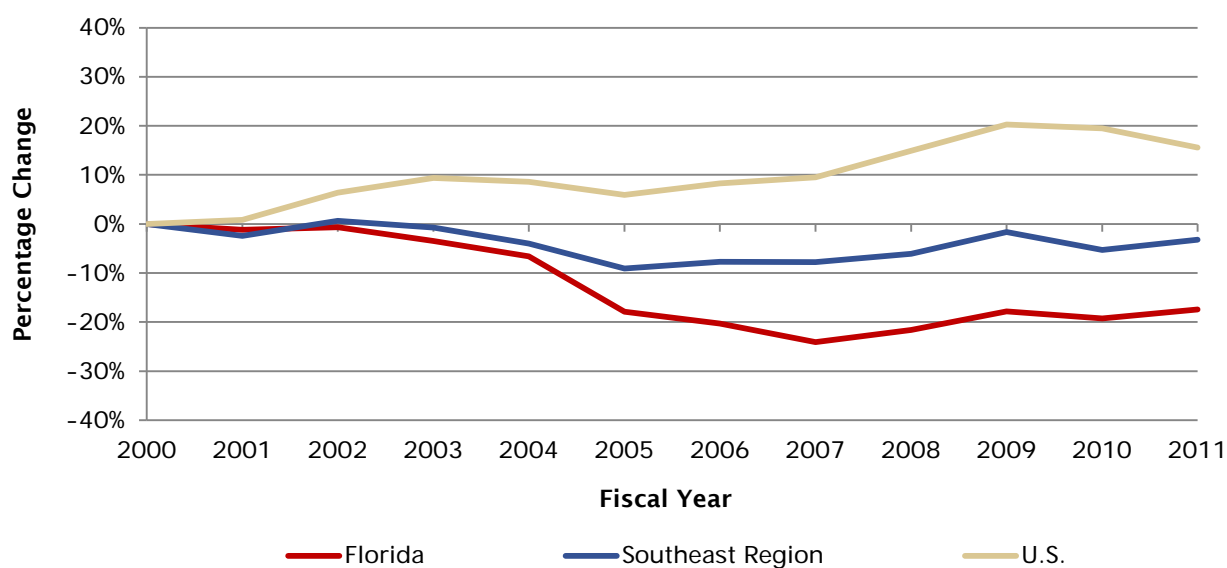
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

In addition to cutting total costs, Florida significantly reduced the cost of administering a single case. Analyzing costs per case allows us to examine whether costs change proportionately with caseload changes, a key indication of administrative efficiency. Average monthly costs per case declined nearly every year during the past decade (Figure II.23). Between FYs 2000 and 2004, the cost of administering one case for one month fell 33 percent (from $23 to $15 per case, adjusted for inflation to 2005 dollars). By FY 2011, costs were about 80 percent of their 2000 levels (or $5 per case). This decline was larger than for other states in the Southeast region and the United States.

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[34] Throughout the report, costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

Figure II.23. Percentage Change in Average Monthly Costs per Case from 2000 Baseline, 2000–2011, Florida (2005 Dollars)
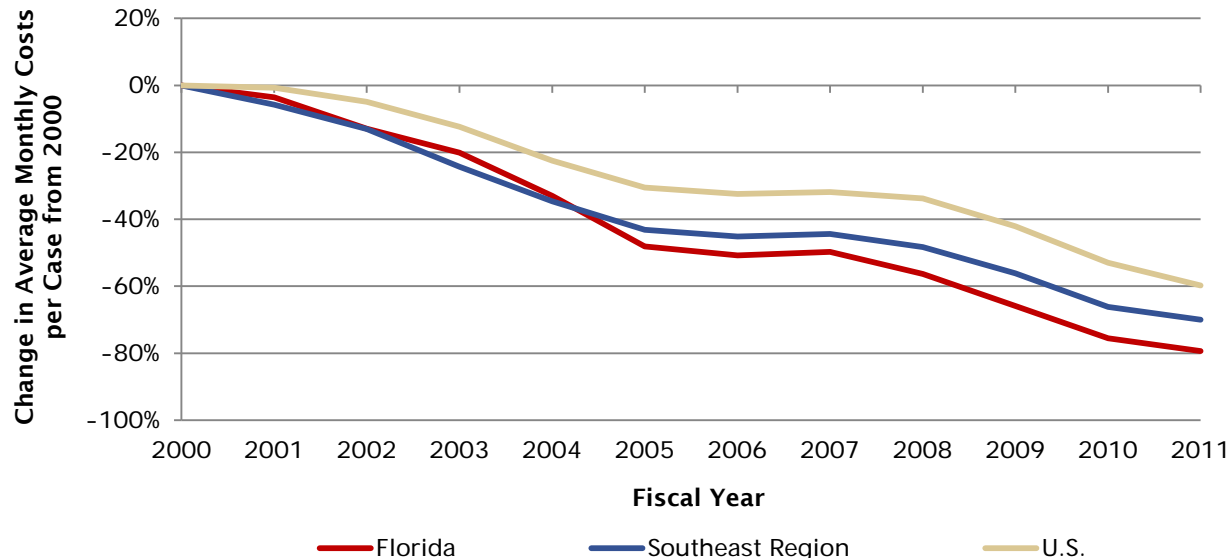
Source: Mathematica tabulations of average monthly costs and average monthly caseloads from the USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

The small jump between FYs 2005 and 2006 could be due to expenses associated with implementing expensive reforms in calendar year 2005, particularly the online system. In later years, reductions are likely largely attributable to the fact that fixed costs (such as rent, technology development) can be spread across a substantially larger client pool. Unfortunately, data on costs are not detailed enough to determine with more precision the role modernization played in improving efficiency.

Throughout the past decade, certification costs—the costs associated with processing applications and determining eligibility at certification and recertification periods—accounted for 71 to 82 percent of total spending (Table II.1). The share spent on certification dropped from FYs 2003 to 2006 as technology-related expenses pushed up spending on automated data processing system (ADP) operations and development. Issuance costs—the costs associated with disbursing benefits to recipients—constituted the second largest expense, at 5 to 13 percent, with higher relative spending during early years of modernization reform. The proportion of funds allocated to quality control and fraud also increased during these years, consistent with staff reports that they took on a larger focus during modernization.

Overall, spending on certification costs fell 20 percent between FYs 2000 and 2011 (Figure II.24), falling from $92.9 million to $74.1 million (2005 dollars). Costs were even lower between 2005 and 2010 (about 30 percent less than in FY 2000). Although Florida's spending on certification went down, other states in the Southeast region and the nation as a whole saw their certification costs increase 10 and 28 percent, respectively, between FYs 2000 and 2011. This disparity may be due to differences in cost allocations; it is also possible that modernization initiatives in Florida helped manage certification costs.

Table II.1. Allocation of Reported State Share of SNAP Administrative Costs, FY 2000–2011, Florida (Percent)

Administrative Costs	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Certification	81.8	79.1	80.5	80.2	77.0	74.3	70.7	70.7	73.6	75.3	71.7	79.1
Issuance	5.4	4.9	5.6	5.2	7.0	10.5	12.7	11.6	10.2	8.9	10.1	6.3
Quality Control	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.4	1.5	1.1	0.8	0.8	0.7
Fraud	1.3	3.8	1.4	2.8	2.5	3.0	2.5	4.1	2.8	1.9	1.7	1.5
ADP Operations	4.0	4.2	3.5	3.1	3.7	3.9	5.7	3.2	3.2	3.5	3.6	5.4
ADP Development	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Employment and Training	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.6	1.3	1.3	0.5	0.1
Outreach	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Misc.	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.7	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.2	1.1
SNAP Education	1.7	1.6	2.1	1.5	1.8	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.6	2.3	4.6	0.0
Unspecified Other	3.4	3.7	4.0	4.5	4.0	3.6	4.2	5.3	5.4	4.9	5.6	5.6
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

Figure II.24. Percentage Change in SNAP Certification Costs from 2000 Baseline, 2000–2011, Florida (2005 Dollars)
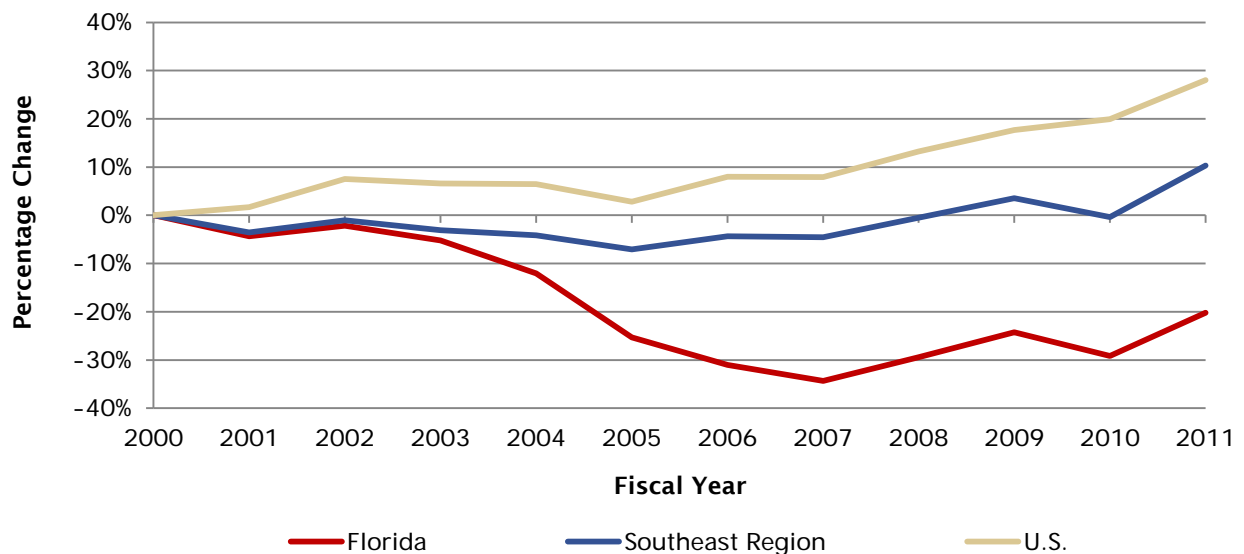
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

Despite reducing total administrative costs, Florida's issuance costs doubled between FYs 2003 and 2006, before returning to earlier levels in FY 2011 (Figure II.25). Florida's issuance costs in FYs 2004 through 2006 may have been elevated while issuing benefits to victims of active hurricane seasons. Issuance costs subsequently declined between FYs 2007 and 2009, and in FY 2011, despite caseload increases. Efficiencies gained from modernization were perhaps partly responsible for this decline. By 2011, issuance costs remained higher in Florida than the rest of the region, likely due to higher caseload growth.

Figure II.25. Percentage Change in SNAP Issuance Costs from 2000 Baseline, 2000–2011, Florida (2005 Dollars)
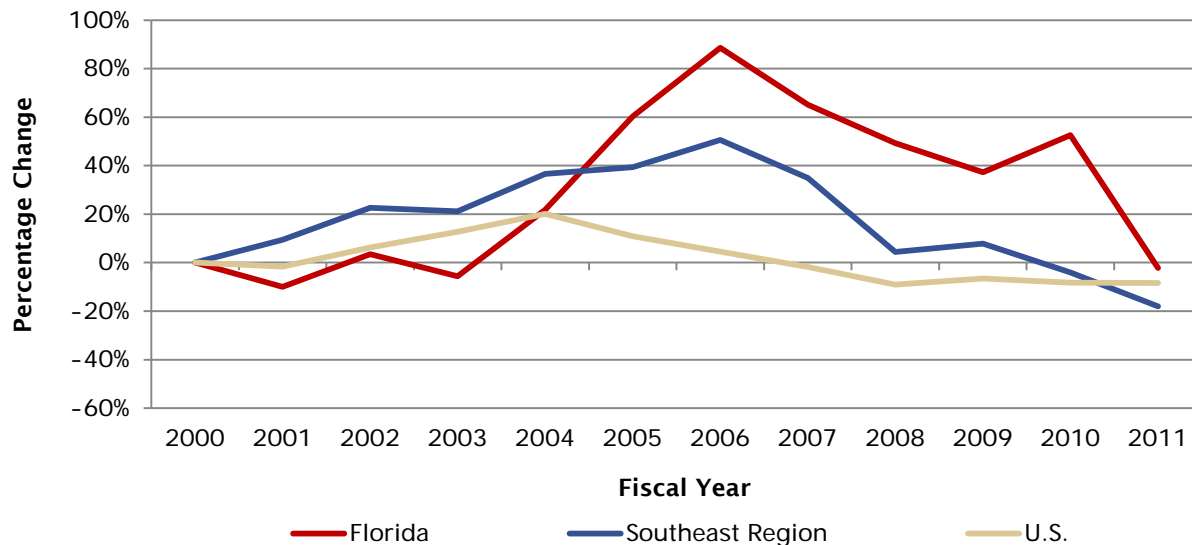
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

4.   SNAP Staff

Over the past decade, DCF workers were responsible for increasingly large caseloads. Respondents indicated that the state's modernization reforms were necessary for managing this growth. Staff were generally satisfied with the changes and have become accustomed to new policies and procedures. Some staff missed the type of social work the caseworker model required, and views on telecommuting were mixed. Despite efficiency gains under modernization, stress associated with high caseloads remained a core issue. For their part, state and local leaders were continuously pursuing further improvement.

a.   Staffing Levels

Staff reductions largely took place between 2004 and 2006, then leveled off. ACCESS eligibility workers numbered 7,208 in January 2004 and 4,109 by January 2007, a 43 percent reduction (Figure II.26). Staffing levels increased slightly beginning in 2010, with around 160 additional workers added through 2010 and 2011. Overall, staff levels were 41 percent lower in 2011 than in 2003, when data were first available.

Figure II.26. Eligibility Staffing Levels and Cases per Eligibility Worker, 2003–2011, Florida
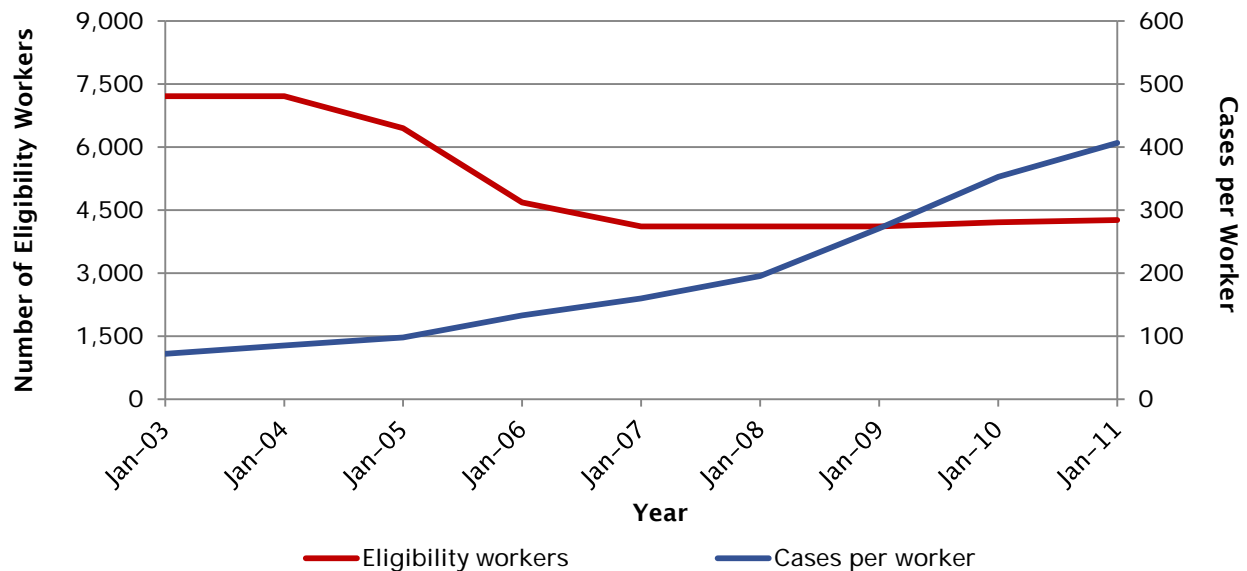
Staff caseloads increased as cases grew and staffing levels contracted. Caseloads, calculated as the number of active monthly cases per eligibility worker, increased from 72 cases per worker in 2003 to 160 in 2007, an increase of 122 percent (Figure II.26). Caseload growth accelerated in 2009. By 2011, 406 households were enrolled in SNAP for every eligibility worker. Overall, workers were responsible for 466 percent more cases in 2011 than 2003.

b.   Staff Satisfaction

Although staff in Florida considered modernization necessary for managing the caseload growth they experienced, the day-to-day level of work remained a significant source of stress. As one administrator stated, "There's no way we could have kept up with demand for our services without technology" changes. Repeatedly, staff noted that without tools to manage workflow—notably AMS, Data & Reports, and electronic case records—they would not have been able to handle the workload. Staff also emphasized the importance of policy changes in reducing burden. According to one administrator, "The only way staff could handle double the caseload is to do less per case." Another administrator reported, "Every chance we get, we try to simplify. We keep pushing the envelope." There was also recognition that partners fill an important gap: "I think without them, we'd be in trouble."

Among those interviewed, staff satisfaction with telecommuting was mixed. Workers appreciated saving money and time on their commute. As an added benefit, at least some supervisors permitted staff to set flexible work hours. Despite these benefits, some staff reported they would prefer to work from an office. They described disadvantages to telecommuting, including difficulty turning work off after eight hours while knowing more needs to be done; difficulty separating work and life; reduced interaction with, and support from, colleagues formerly down the hall; increased response time from supervisors via email or telephone; and slower internet speeds, especially in rural areas. As with past modernization initiatives, satisfaction with telecommuting may change as new staff are hired as telecommuters.

When the state began modernizing, staff found the shift to a process-based staffing model challenging. As one administrator put it, eligibility workers lost their "social worker mentality." Losing personal, extended interaction with a consistent set of clients effectively changed what it meant to be a social worker for DCF. Now, some supervisors have to remind their staff to view applications as people, especially in the face of pressure to meet performance standards. It appears that staff who predated modernization have since adjusted to major initiatives, some of which were implemented as far back as seven or eight years ago. However, it is possible that some of those who were most dissatisfied with their new roles may have left the department.

By the time of this study, staff had accepted that modernization involved continuous change. DCF staff recognized they had come a long way in streamlining processes but were not yet satisfied. As one field administrator stated, roles "are shifting all the time as we fine-tune it, because it's still not where it needs to be." Staff perceived modernization as an evolution and believed that additional operational improvements, whether big or small, would always be possible. They regularly pursued new ways to reduce costs and staff burden, and they were not afraid to try new processes, even knowing they could fail. For example, to reduce staff burden, one local office stopped allowing clients to leave verification in a drop box, which forced clients to scan documents themselves or have a clerk help them. This simple action saved clerical staff several steps. Moreover, DCF continued to refine its delivery model by enhancing client accounts with new features, such as document uploads, and permitting select partners to conduct interviews on a trial basis. DCF also sought improvements through reorganizations at the state, regional, and circuit levels.

Modernizing also entailed letting go of past efforts that did not have the intended effect or were no longer beneficial. For example, some locations have stopped distinguishing between "red-" and "green-track" interviews, and some no longer employ a driver that streams new web information through FLORIDA to quickly identify discrepancies with older case records. During the study period, the state was also examining whether any data exchanges or alerts were unnecessary.

Despite efficiencies gained through modernization, managing the sheer volume of work remains the hardest factor for staff today. Staff were under intense pressure to meet performance standards and ensure clients who need benefits receive them in a timely fashion.

C. Lessons Learned

Five important lessons to guide decision makers in the state and elsewhere emerged from Florida's experience with modernizing SNAP administration:

1. **Modernization is a continuous evolution and requires continuous reexamination.** Administrators at state and local levels in Florida frequently re-evaluated what worked, what did not, and what else could be done to streamline processes. Statements such as "With modernization, it's something you're constantly tweaking," "Every chance we get, we try to simplify [policies]. We keep pushing the envelope," and roles "are shifting all the time as we fine-tune it, because it's still not where it needs to be" captured a mood of continuous evolution. Staff at state and local levels felt that additional operational improvements would always be possible. Local leaders were not afraid to experiment with tweaking procedures or let concepts that were no longer beneficial fall by the wayside.

2. **Client "self-service" can be convenient for clients and reduce burden on staff.** One of Florida's biggest changes came through re-imagining the traditional social

service delivery model, in which clients relied on a state-employed social worker to manage their case throughout its duration. As of 2012, clients can apply online, interview over the telephone, manage their case online, and seek assistance from a community partner. In some locations, on a trial basis, clients can even conduct their interview with a partner. According to one local administrator, these reforms have given "customers the flexibility to govern the eligibility process themselves." As another put it: "The great thing modernization did was allow them to come to the office, make a copy, … and go" without waiting all day at the "welfare office" for an appointment. There was some concern that some clients might be deterred by the new process, but there was no clear evidence to confirm this belief. Focus group recipients generally found the online tools convenient and easy to use; online application use of approximately 90 percent supports this feeling. For eligibility workers, client self-service can save valuable time, which in turn helps them to handle larger workloads. For example, online versions of applications reduce data entry and eliminate a scanning step, and online benefit information reduces telephone inquiries.

3. **Avoiding cutting staff too deeply.** Capacity issues were most apparent in the call center, where 82 percent of callers who reached the IVR and elected to speak with an agent were unsuccessful in 2011. An understaffed call center makes it difficult for clients to ask questions, resolve issues, and complete their SNAP requirements. Staff reports indicate clients also experienced difficulty getting through to local interview lines. DCF administrators and eligibility workers recommended that, to the extent possible, states maintain staffing levels until they can determine their productivity gains from a new initiative—in other words, "Don't cut staff first." As one administrator stated, "I think probably where Florida has made its mistake…is putting the cart before the horse. They [implemented] the changes and cut the staff prior to getting the technology in place right."

4. **Replace mainframe eligibility systems.** DCF staff at state and local levels recommend that other states update their old mainframe eligibility systems. Instead of investing upfront in a modern eligibility system, DCF developed AMS, a web-based front with the mainframe eligibility system, FLORIDA, running in the background. Even though AMS, when complete, will make it unnecessary for staff to use FLORIDA directly, relying on FLORIDA for back-end processing has disadvantages. To make any systems changes (for example, to update policies), DCF has to consider how the change will affect interconnected systems; with a rules-engine-based eligibility system, one change would not be as complex or costly. Staff also pointed out that the old mainframe technology allows eligibility workers to make mistakes, while a rules-engine based system (which evaluates relationships) would realize a discrepancy and thus help prevent errors. As one administrator stated, "The FLORIDA [eligibility] system has become antiquated." At the time of this study, DCF officials were considering whether to replace FLORIDA.

5. **Communication is key.** Staff at state, regional, and local levels emphasized the importance of collecting feedback from, and communicating openly with, staff at all levels, clients, and partners when developing and implementing changes. Some state officials who were less involved during early modernization efforts found that their perspectives contributed to valuable input during design stages. Regional- and local-level staff would also encourage states to seek input from frontline workers during development. Because they are carrying out the work, they are well positioned to suggest improvements and identify how one change will affect other procedures. DCF staff also

recommended seeking input directly from clients, communicating openly with clients about SNAP procedures and upcoming changes, and obtaining community buy-in. As one community partner noted, there is some confusion in the community about SNAP eligibility and application rules.

III. CASE STUDY OF MODERNIZATION: GEORGIA

Efforts to modernize SNAP administration in Georgia have evolved incrementally, with most reforms occurring over the past few years. One of the state's core modernization goals was to reduce and evenly distribute staff burden, particularly in light of large caseload growth and significant reductions in the number of eligibility workers. To this end, the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), the Georgia agency responsible for administering SNAP, enhanced the online system to enable client self-service, encouraged clients to interview by telephone, and shifted away from the traditional caseworker model. Today, clients in Georgia can apply, interview, recertify, and learn about their case without ever stepping inside a local office.

Georgia also sought to improve error rates and increase program access. DFCS changed eligibility policies to simplify the application process, such as by reducing verification requirements. Through its efforts, DFCS successfully cut its payment error rate by 77 percent over the past decade, with modest overall reductions in negative error rates. Based on FNS's Program Access Index (PAI), SNAP access improved by one-third from 2005 to 2010.

Clients and staff were generally satisfied with how SNAP administration has evolved, though some concerns emerged. Clients who used the online system (67 percent in December 2011) found it convenient. Some staff, particularly long-time workers, missed getting to know their clients and attending to their broader needs, and some clients missed having a direct contact. Regardless of their position, staff recognized that this change was necessary for handling large caseloads.

As with other chapters, we describe here the state's approach to modernization along four dimensions (administrative restructuring, technology, policy, and partnerships). We then examine how main outcomes changed over the study period. The chapter concludes with a discussion of lessons drawn from Georgia's experience.

A. Description of Modernization

Georgia implemented modernization initiatives to address three main goals: (1) to reduce and evenly distribute the burden on staff, (2) to improve error rates, and (3) to increase access for those in need. Two key contextual factors played a role in establishing the first two goals. First, in fiscal year (FY) 2007, FNS notified DFCS that the state could face financial sanctions for consecutive years of high payment error rates. Second, cases more than doubled since 2005 (to 854,000 in December 2011), due in part to poor economic conditions that triggered higher need, and the simultaneous implementation of the online application in 2009, which expanded access (Figure III.1).

In addition, staffing levels were significantly reduced under a critical hiring process in effect from July 2009 through July 2011, in which DFCS could hire only for positions considered critical. In practice, this amounted to a hiring freeze. As the number of cases more than doubled from 2007 to 2011, the state lost 27 percent its eligibility workers through attrition. In turn, staff caseloads nearly tripled, from 154 to 443 cases per worker. These factors contributed to the strong and sudden need to reduce and equalize staff burden.

Figure III.1. Number of Cases per Month, 2005- 2011, Georgia
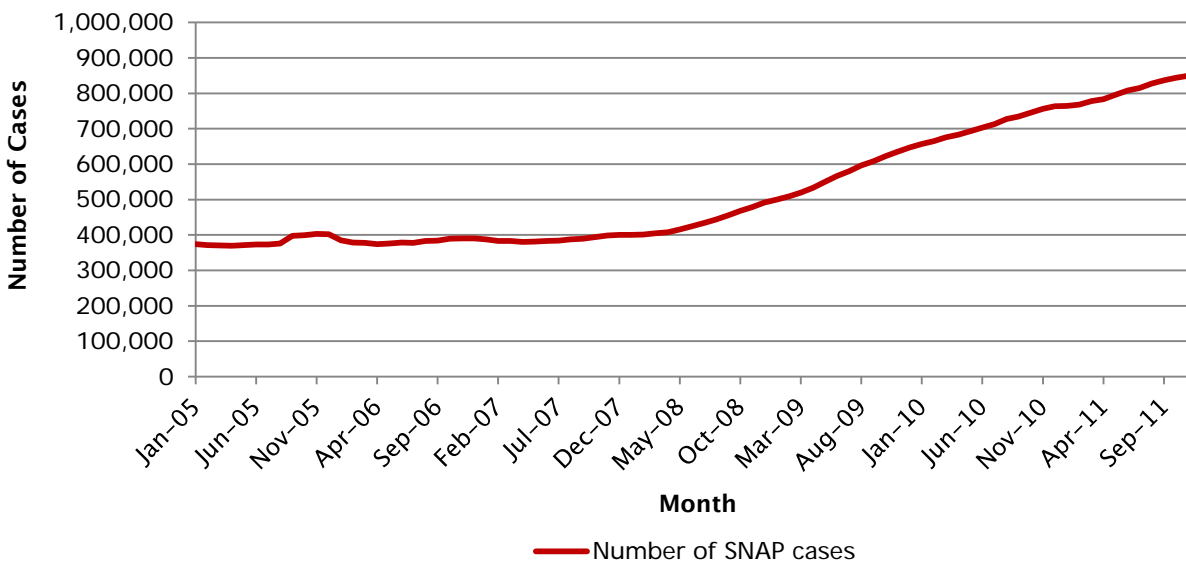
In this section, we describe Georgia's approach to modernization, followed by a detailed description of the individual modernization initiatives in each of the four categories examined in this study. For context, Figure III.2 illustrates sites visited and other notable locations in the state. Appendix I.2 describes the modernization efforts in further detail.

1.   Approach to Modernization

Georgia implemented most modernization initiatives recently, and a few pivotal ones were still in development when this study concluded. For instance, the state's existing online, self-service system was created in 2009. The state's call center has been in place longer; it was first implemented in the Atlanta metropolitan area in 1997. By the end of our data collection period, the state had only recently began making additional significant investments in technology for SNAP workers. DFCS piloted a document imaging system to aide in staff centralization. Other technology initiatives, such as enhanced workflow management tools and reports, were in development.

In terms of staff restructuring, at the time of this study, DFCS had recently moved away from the caseworker model (in which clients are assigned to dedicated caseworkers for the duration of the clients' SNAP cases) and began centralizing operations for contiguous counties in an effort known as Georgia Re-Engineering Our Work (GROW). It will require some time before DFCS can centralize operations statewide—its ultimate objective. Georgia's efforts to build a network of partners were also in progress.

Relative to other states, DFCS's process for implementing these changes was not holistic. Some of its specific modernization initiatives evolved as opportunities arose, whereas others were conceived with a long-term vision in mind. For instance, state officials considered enhancing online functionality after observing high utilization of the online application. The decision to restructure staff in local offices was made separately to help manage rising caseloads. In contrast to the incremental approach they took in planning the online system, state officials developed a long-term plan to follow in pursuit of their vision for a more specialized and centralized approach to staffing (described later).

Figure III.2. Sites Visited in Georgia
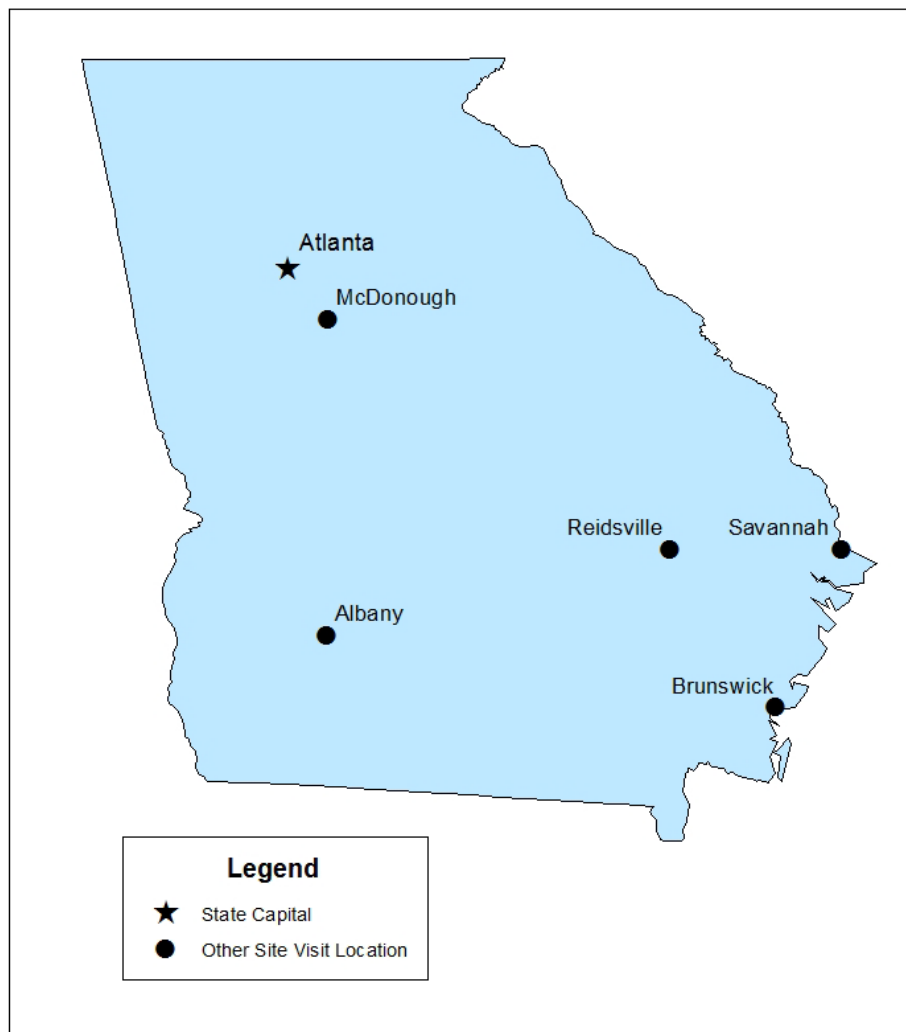
Note: County offices visited include Fulton County (Atlanta), Henry County (McDonough), Dougherty County (Albany), Chatham County (Savannah), Glynn County (Brunswick), and Tattnall County (Reidsville).

Although the design was not holistic, the decision-making process for devising staffing and policy reforms was collaborative, with opportunities for field staff to provide input. At the state level, cross-unit teams collaborated to plan changes. When planning for GROW in 2010, multiple state and regional staff members were involved early and regional leaders made major decisions on how to structure staff. Some regional leaders collaborated with their administrators and supervisors, and some supervisors actively sought input from frontline workers on certain minor decisions. Decisions on policy were also collaborative. Policy specialists at the region level—and quality assurance, quality control, and policy and training staff at the state level—worked together to identify and analyze error trends to improve or clarify procedures. According to state staff, collaboration has improved over time. When developing the online system in 2006, there was limited involvement from trainers, field staff, and other staff knowledgeable about the state's eligibility system. Since then, state officials have made an effort to include input from staff across the hierarchy.

2.   Summary of Changes, by Category

a.   Restructuring of Administrative Functions

Georgia established a call center and implemented a process-based model in which workers specialize in eligibility tasks and offices within regions are centralized. Efforts to implement the call center began in the late 1990s, whereas efforts to specialize and centralize began following both the online application in late 2007 and significant caseload growth in 2008 (Figure III.3).

DFCS instituted a call center (originally called a change center) to centralize certain staff functions. In doing so, it intended to reduce the responsibilities of eligibility workers, enabling them to focus on conducting interviews and determining eligibility.

Figure III.3. Summary of Changes to Administrative Functions, Georgia

Description of Activity	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Call Center Staff Functions[a]															
Answer general questions	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	■	■	■	■	■	■
Provide account information	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	■	■	■	■	■	■
Register online applications										■	■	■	■	■	■
Process changes submitted by callers	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	■	■	■	■	■	■
Process changes submitted online										■	■	■	■	■	■
Specialization and/or Centralization of Staff for:															
Registering and assigning cases										■	■	■	■	■	■
Processing online applications										▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨
Conducting interviews or determining eligibility[b]														▨	▨
Intake or ongoing cases[b]										▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨
Process-based model														■	■
Telecommuting[c]														■	■

Source: Information reported to Mathematica by the Georgia DFCS.

[a] The first call center location opened in 1998 to cover metropolitan Atlanta. In 2001, Georgia added a second location for 67 southern counties, and in 2007, call center operations expanded statewide. In 2008, technology enhancements enabled the two call center locations to combine under the same toll-free telephone number.

[b] This type of specialization and/or centralization was typical beginning in the year shown. However, some areas implemented this change earlier, and it was not mandated statewide.

[c] Telecommuting was limited to call center agents.

▨ Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.
■ Initiative in statewide implementation.

The functions of the call center evolved over time. Initially, the call center was responsible only for processing client-reported changes and responding to client questions. As the online system was implemented, the call center assumed responsibility for additional tasks. By 2008, the call center was responsible for three main functions:

1. **Responding to client phone calls for inquires, changes, or paper forms**—Clients were instructed to call the call center with general or case-specific questions and to report changes. When clients call with questions, they most frequently inquire about the status of their case or about policy or procedural changes; clients did not commonly call with general questions about SNAP.

2. **Processing changes.** Staff processed changes clients reported by telephone or through their online accounts, or changes staff uncovered via data exchanges, such as with vital statistics. Staff also requested and processed verification associated with client-reported changes.

3. **Registering online applications.** To register online applications, frontline workers entered the information from online applications into the eligibility system, which were then processed by eligibility workers in local offices.[35] County offices were initially responsible for registration until DFCS determined the call center could more efficiently assume this function.

Early on, administrators reported spending as much as an hour on a single telephone call. As the call center's role and scope expanded, and as cases have increased, call duration has diminished.

The call center was initially operable for the Atlanta metropolitan area in 1998; a second location opened three years later to cover southern Georgia; and, in 2007, the scope expanded statewide. In 2008, the state enhanced the telephone system and installed a new technology platform to direct calls, enabling clients to call a single toll-free number to reach agents in either Atlanta or Albany. Employing the new platform, which operates via voice over internet provider (VOIP) technology, has enabled call agents to telecommute. At the time of this report, 60 percent of call agents were telecommuting, including all agents based in Atlanta and some based in Albany. Telecommuting, in turn, has reduced the amount of office space required.

DFCS restructured local office workers to further relieve staff burden. In 2011, local offices around the state systematically shifted from the traditional caseworker model under the state's GROW effort.[36] Even before this statewide change, many local offices across the state specialized staff based on intake and ongoing functions, which handle initial applications and recertifications, respectively. DFCS officials conceived GROW as a way to manage large caseloads efficiently. Under GROW, multiple eligibility workers were responsible for a single case. The model assumes each worker completes his or her task by touching the case only once—a process staff referred to as "One and Done"—before handing it off to the next worker.

Beyond this basic framework, there was considerable and intentional variation in staff roles and centralization within and across regions. State and regional staff realized through piloting that a standardized model would not work statewide due to the range in office sizes; many offices have 5 or fewer eligibility workers, whereas some have 50 or more. Consequently, state directors did not

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[35] At the time of the visit, one region registered its own online applications as part of a pilot of the Medicaid and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) online applications.

[36] Although GROW was the impetus for staff restructuring on a statewide level, some county offices or entire regions had a degree of centralization before GROW was conceived, and some locations began restructuring in anticipation of GROW.

hand down specific requirements for staffing structures or determine which offices should share caseloads, leaving it up to regions to determine how best to implement GROW for their mix of counties.

Within intake and ongoing units, some regions further specialized staff based on interviewer and processor functions, expedited and nonexpedited applications, and/or online and paper applications. For example, across a set of three centralized counties encompassing Savannah, eligibility workers were separated into four types of functional units: (1) expedited applications, (2) standard online applications, (3) standard paper applications, and (4) paper and online recertifications. Fulton County,[37] the largest county in terms of staff, had additional staff roles for reopen specialists, who reopened cases that closed the previous month, and missed appointment workers, who continued to contact clients whom interviewers could not reach.

Three regions visited as part of this study took different approaches to centralization, all with the goal of equitably distributing workloads. Leaders in each region considered the number of staff and volume of cases in each county office. Lacking a document imaging system, they also considered geographic proximity of county offices to minimize the movement of paperwork between them (see the discussion of associated challenges in the section on SNAP staff). In two of the regions, the county with the most staff was designated for either intake or ongoing functions, whereas other counties were responsible for the other function. The third region spread functional units across offices so that no single county was responsible for a particular task. Two of the regions, with 9 and 18 counties apiece, grouped a few contiguous counties together, rather than distribute SNAP cases across the entire area, and created a new administrative position above supervisors for at least one of the groupings to help oversee operations.

Georgia ultimately plans to standardize the specialization of staff roles throughout the state to centralize staff functions at the state level, erasing divisions based on county or region borders so there is "One Caseload for One Georgia." The objective is to more efficiently distribute work from high- to low-volume areas. However, these efforts are on hold until the requisite technology is in place statewide.

b. Expanding Uses of Technology

Georgia's technological advances have focused on creating and enhancing online access for clients (Figure III.4). The state implemented an online system in December 2008 called Common Point of Access to Social Services (COMPASS).[38] The COMPASS system, which was funded in part through an FNS grant to improve program access, includes capacity for SNAP clients to complete major application and recertification functions online. At the time of this report, applicants could use COMPASS to screen for benefits, submit an application, and check the status of their online applications. SNAP recipients can also create online accounts called MyCOMPASS, from which they can recertify, check their benefit amounts, and report changes to their household circumstances. Once the document imaging system is implemented statewide, clients will be able to upload

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[37] At the conclusion of the study, Fulton and DeKalb counties (both of which cover part of the city of Atlanta) combined into a single region; beforehand, they each operated as independent regions.

[38] COMPASS was originally built for Pennsylvania by Deloitte and has been transferred to other states, including Georgia, Delaware, and Virginia (Kauff et al. 2012).

verification directly to their accounts. By encouraging clients to self-serve, the state reduced some of the demand at local offices and the call center, both of which were inundated with calls (described later).

The COMPASS system services more programs than just SNAP. The online application is available for child care customers and the screening tool extends to several additional programs (see Appendix I.2 for more information). Medicaid and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients can create accounts and use the tools available as part of the account system. At the time of this study, the online application was available to Medicaid and TANF applicants in one region as part of a pilot. Anticipating that the availability of online applications for these programs would significantly increase the number of applications received for each program and for SNAP, DFCS officials decided to conduct ample testing before making them accessible statewide.

Figure III.4. Summary of Expanded Technology Applications, Georgia
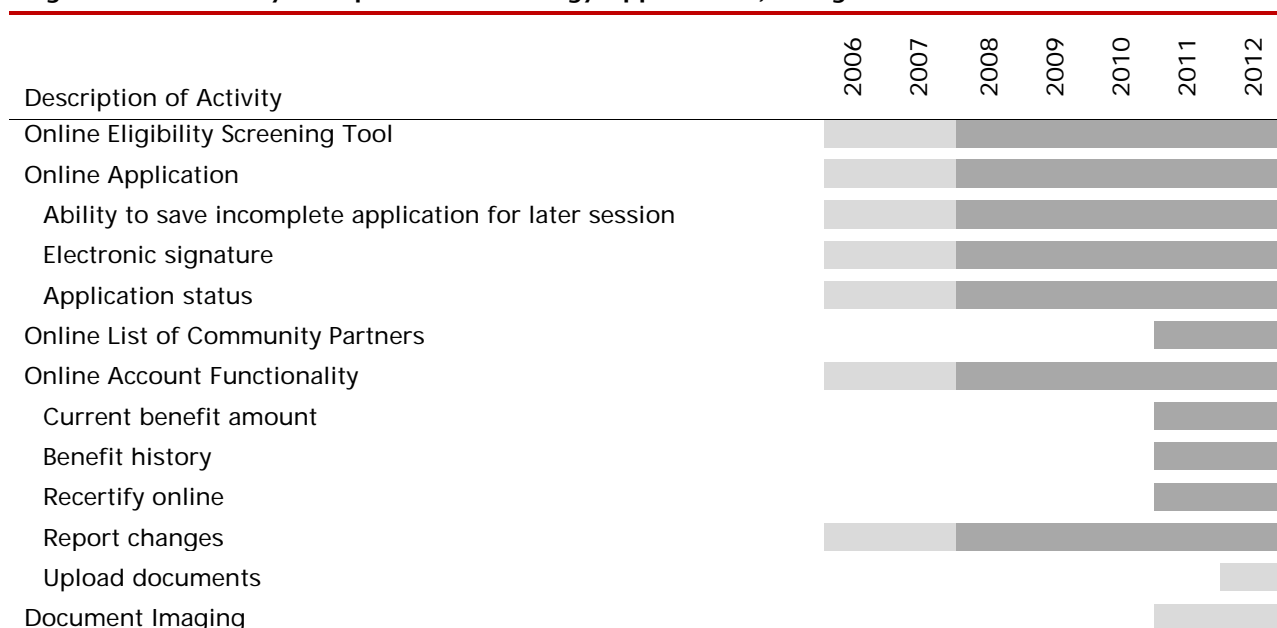
Description of Activity	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Online Eligibility Screening Tool	░	░	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Online Application	░	░	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Ability to save incomplete application for later session	░	░	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Electronic signature	░	░	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Application status	░	░	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Online List of Community Partners						▓	▓
Online Account Functionality	░	░	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Current benefit amount						▓	▓
Benefit history						▓	▓
Recertify online						▓	▓
Report changes	░	░	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Upload documents							░
Document Imaging							░

Source: Information reported to Mathematica by the Georgia DFCS.

░ Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.
▓ Initiative in statewide implementation.

Facing limited resources, DFCS has made fewer investments in systems for SNAP workers than in systems for clients. At the time of this study, a document imaging system was in the pilot stages, with statewide implementation set for 2012. The document imaging system will enable the state to create electronic case files, which will greatly assist in its efforts to centralize local offices within regions and ultimately statewide. Some staff—from state, regional, and local levels—also identified a need for enhanced workflow management tools to complement their switch to a process-based model, including tools to monitor case status and assignments. Regional and local staff devised their own tracking methods; DFCS was in the process of developing more sophisticated tools at the time of this report.

As of 2012, DFCS continued to use a mainframe eligibility system, SUCCESS (System for the Uniform Calculation and Consolidation of Economic Support Services). Some incompatibility issues arose between SUCCESS and COMPASS. As a result, it was necessary for frontline workers to

toggle between both systems to compare new and existing information and key in updates, thus creating inefficiencies. Local staff also reported that SUCCESS can be slow and even crash, which slows the pace at which staff can work. The transfer of application information between COMPASS and SUCCESS could also be delayed, although state officials reported this issue was resolved by 2012. State directors identified the costs of making system changes in SUCCESS to reflect modernization initiatives, such as changes to eligibility rules, as another challenge. Despite these obstacles to using a mainframe system, the alternative, replacing SUCCESS, would be very expensive.

Some improvements were planned or underway for other aspects of the state's technological infrastructure, including bandwidth, network integration across counties, telephone system capacities, and computers. With more client interaction occurring over the telephone rather than in person, staff reported that clients commonly experience busy telephone lines and full voicemail boxes when calling local offices. DFCS planned to replace existing telephone systems in local offices with a queuing system that permits callers to wait on hold if extensions are full. The existing system is a holdover from the casework model, in which eligibility workers needed their own telephone lines to interact with their set of clients. The state was also replacing old computers and increasing network bandwidth. Increasing bandwidth, one state director noted, is necessary before rolling out the document imaging system and centralizing statewide.

Modernization in Georgia from the Client's Perspective

Georgia's online system, telephone interviews, and staff restructuring significantly altered the way clients interact with SNAP during each stage of the SNAP lifecycle. These reforms equipped clients to self-serve while eliminating reliance on a dedicated caseworker and providing fewer reasons to visit a local office. Clients in Georgia could still apply and recertify on paper and interview at a local office if they wished, but that was no longer the only way. Waiving face-to-face interviews has enabled today's clients to be completely served without ever traveling to their local office, a burden that can present economic costs and other barriers.

Application. Clients can complete an eligibility screening before applying, which can encourage applications from those who doubt their eligibility. Clients can submit paper applications or apply online from any computer with an Internet connection. Those without a home computer can access one through a local office, a community organization, or a friend or family member. Paper applications are available in county offices or online and in 11 languages. Assistance is available through local office clerical staff, the call center, or community organizations, although most clients who apply online likely do so without assistance.

Certification. Most clients interview by telephone with specialized workers who may or may not be based in their county. Workers typically call clients before their scheduled appointment times, which clients receive in the mail after applying. Clients may also visit their local office at their appointment time. Since the online application was expanded to cover more questions, initial eligibility interviews for online applicants are shorter than for paper applicants. Interviewers inform clients which verification documents to submit; clients also receive a verification checklist in the mail. Clients mail in, drop off, or fax their verification documents to either the local office in their county or to another county in their region responsible for processing. To learn the status of their applications, clients can sign in to their online accounts, contact the call center, or wait for a mailed notification. Eligible clients receive EBT cards in the mail through a vendor.

Recertification. Every six months, clients receive a letter in the mail notifying them to submit a recertification form by a specified date. As with the application process, clients can recertify online or on paper. Those who elect to recertify on paper are instructed to contact the call center to request a paper form in the mail. At alternate recertifications, the notifications include an arranged time for an interview. Typically, workers call clients for an interview before the specified time, though clients can opt to interview at their local office during their appointment time. Similar to initial applications, the recertification form was expanded to shorten all recertification interviews.

Instead of interacting with a dedicated caseworker at each recertification period, clients might interview with different staff every time they recertify and send verification to a nearby county that focuses on processing. Clients can speak with call center agents or clerical staff in their local office for assistance.

Case maintenance. Clients manage their cases through their online accounts or by contacting the call center. The online system has capacity for clients to check their benefit amounts and report changes. Self-serving through the online system is increasingly encouraged. For other questions about their case, clients typically contact the call center. Clients throughout the state can also visit community partners and in certain areas can visit a partner with formal ties to DFCS for assistance.

c. Partnering with Community Organizations

Georgia's emphasis on partnerships was limited but growing at the time of this report. DFCS began developing a formal, statewide network of partners through its Registered COMPASS Community Partners pilot project in 2011. Formal partnerships have been in place since 2006 through SNAP outreach grants (Figure III.5).

Figure III.5. Summary of Partnerships with Community Organizations, Georgia

Description of Activity	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Partners Conduct Outreach			▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Partners Offer Access to and/or Assistance with Application						░	░
Formal Contracts or MOUs			▓	▓	▓	▓	▓

Source: Information reported to Mathematica by the Georgia DFCS.

░ Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.
▓ Initiative in statewide implementation.

Registered COMPASS partners offer clients access and assistance. There are three types of registered partners:

1. Assisted-service sites offer assistance plus computer, telephone, fax or other equipment.

2. Self-service sites offer equipment but no assistance.

3. Umbrella organizations register assisted and self-service sites, with final approval from the state, and train, monitor, and provide assistance to their sites. Umbrella organizations may or may not additionally provide the services of assisted sites.

These categories are based on Florida's community partnership network. A key difference is in the use of umbrella organizations, which formally contract with assisted- and self-service sites and are legally responsible for supporting and monitoring them. This enables Georgia to build a large network with a smaller investment of staff time.

Registered COMPASS partners are granted access to client information in the COMPASS online system through a partner dashboard after signing an agreement that registers them with DFCS. These partners are listed on the COMPASS website along with their contact information and a description of the general services they provide.

A full-time coordinator was appointed in spring 2012 to work with existing Registered COMPASS partners and expand the network. As of spring 2012, eighteen partners had been registered through the pilot—sixteen assisted-service sites under two umbrella organizations, one of which was also a SNAP outreach grantee. These early partners were concentrated in northeast Georgia and metro-Atlanta (Table III.1).

Table III.1. Number of Formal Community Partners, by Type and Location, 2012, Georgia

	Location					
	Northwest GA	Northeast GA	Metropolitan Atlanta[a]	Middle GA	Savannah	All
Total Community Partners	1	14	9	1	1	26
Total Registered COMPASS Community Partners (pilot)	0	14	4	0	0	18
Umbrella organizations[b]	–	1	1	–	–	
Assisted service sites	–	13	3	–	–	
Self-service sites	–	0	0	–	–	
Total SNAP Outreach Grant Partners	1	0	6	1	1	9[c]

Source: Information reported to Mathematica by the Georgia DFCS.

[a] One metropolitan Atlanta partner is both a SNAP outreach grant partner and registered COMPASS community partner; therefore, numbers do not sum to total.

[b] Umbrella organizations enroll, train, monitor, and provide assistance to assisted- and self-service sites. They do not necessarily work directly with clients.

[c] One partner has offices in both metropolitan Atlanta and Savannah and is counted twice in this row.

Registering as a partner with DFCS has advantages for community organizations, DFCS, and clients, and could lead to better service for clients. As registered partners, organizations can contact their umbrella agencies or the state coordinator with questions. Respondents from two community organizations with no formal ties to DFCS reported struggling to build relationships with local office staff and did not know where to turn with questions or complex client cases; one of the organizations eventually pursued a SNAP outreach grant. Registered partners also gain access to a partner dashboard on the online system. The dashboard enables partners to submit or view applications, recertifications, or change reports on their client's behalf; check their client's benefit amount; and track information on the clients they assist. These tools can improve their service delivery and help attract outside grant funding. A formal partnership structure might also help improve communication between DFCS and the community, particularly about upcoming changes. Considering these advantages and that many community organizations throughout the state already helped clients enroll in SNAP as part of their standard services, the number of registered partners could grow quite large.

Before developing registered COMPASS partnerships, Georgia's outreach strategy established partnerships through federal SNAP outreach grants. The state began working with SNAP outreach grantees to improve program access. Through this program, organizations submit an application to FNS, which reimburses half of their outreach costs. Grantees in Georgia had key state contacts they could rely upon for assistance, including local eligibility workers, supervisors, regional administrators, and the state's policy director. Grantees might contact staff, for instance, to resolve an issue with a client's case or to better understand specific eligibility requirements. The state monitors grantees through quarterly reports that include measures of outreach activities, such as the number of fliers distributed and screenings conducted. There were eight grantees in 2012, five of which were also involved the previous year. Grantees were concentrated in the Atlanta metropolitan area and included food banks, economic development agencies, advocacy organizations, and other community organizations.

d.   Policy Simplification

DFCS instituted several policy simplifications (Figure III.6) aimed at reducing error and reducing burden:

- **Simplified eligibility and reporting rules.** Georgia's revised SNAP policies—including broad-based categorical eligibility, reduced verification requirements, and simplified reporting requirements–evolved with the aim of reducing the state's error rate and the burden on eligibility workers.

- **Waivers of face-to-face interviews.** These waivers enabled clients to interview by telephone and postponed interviews for expedited cases until after eligibility determinations. Waiving face-to-face interviews has made it possible for clients to apply and recertify without traveling to a local office.

- **Shorter eligibility interviews.** Implementation of the online application, which was more comprehensive than the paper form, permitted the state to shorten initial eligibility interviews for clients who applied online; the state also expanded the recertification form to shorten all recertification interviews.

- **Less frequent interviews.** In addition, Georgia reduced the frequency of all recertification interviews. Clients continue to recertify every six months, but interview once per year, at alternate recertifications.

Policies continue to evolve as state leaders further explore waivers and other options to increase worker efficiency and reduce the risk of committing errors.

Figure III.6. Summary of Policy Changes, Georgia

Description of Activity	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Shortened Interviews[a]									▓	▓	▓	▓
Waiving Face-to-Face Interviews									▓	▓	▓	▓
Interviews Postponed for Expedited Cases										▓	▓	▓
Interviews at Alternating Recertifications										▓	▓	▓
Eligibility Simplifications, Including:												
Broad-based categorical eligibility							▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Automatic denials						▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Excluding income or assets										▓	▓	▓
Self-employment deduction waiver					▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Waiver to average student work hours										▓	▓	▓
Reduced verification requirements										▓	▓	▓
Simplified reporting				░	░	░	░	░	▓	▓	▓	▓

Source: Information reported to Mathematica by the Georgia DFCS.

[a] Initial interviews were shortened only for clients who applied online. All recertification interviews were shortened.

░ Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.
▓ Initiative in statewide implementation.

B. Changes in Outcomes Following Modernization

Over the past decade, several outcomes in Georgia have changed, creating a dynamic environment for both clients and staff. For instance, the state experienced strong participation growth and improvements in client access. Average monthly SNAP participation more than doubled between 2007 and 2011. Approval rates overall changed little over time, but were slightly lower for online applicants (by late 2011, two-thirds of all applications were submitted online). In general, clients were satisfied with the modernization changes, though some reported challenges accessing staff by telephone. During the study period, the state experienced reduced payment errors, and a disproportionate (relative to other states) decrease in administrative costs. Staff facing an increased workload reported that modernization changes were helpful in general, but that additional planning and technology tools would be beneficial.

Many of Georgia's integral modernization initiatives, including the online system, telephone interviews, and staff restructuring, coincided with the national recession. In addition, many reforms are newly implemented and others are still in planning stages. It is therefore impossible to determine with certainty how modernization has affected these trends. In the remainder of this section, we present outcomes in Georgia in four categories: (1) client access and satisfaction, (2) payment error rates, (3) administrative costs, and (4) staff satisfaction. Additional details on each outcome and specific numbers for each year are presented in Appendix C.

1. Client Access and Satisfaction

a. SNAP Participation and Growth Rates

SNAP participation in Georgia more than doubled since 2005. By December 2011, 854,000 households were enrolled in SNAP, an increase of 124 percent from 2005. Approximately 1.9 million Georgia residents were receiving SNAP benefits, compared with 968,500 in 2005 (Figure III.7). Participation began rising in 2007 and escalated through 2011 as Georgians faced increasing rates of unemployment and poverty brought on by the economic recession. In 2010, 1 in 10 Georgia residents was unemployed and 18 percent had incomes below the federal poverty level.

Caseload growth was uneven across the state, with consistently higher rates of growth in urban counties (Figure III.8). The need to distribute cases equitably across offices is what drove state decision makers to work toward statewide centralization. By 2011, caseload growth at the regional level ranged from 65 to 264 percent of 2005 levels. Growth in urban counties was 32 percentage points higher than in rural counties.

Figure III.7. Trends in Monthly Average Number of SNAP Recipients and Economic Indicators, 2005-2011, Georgia
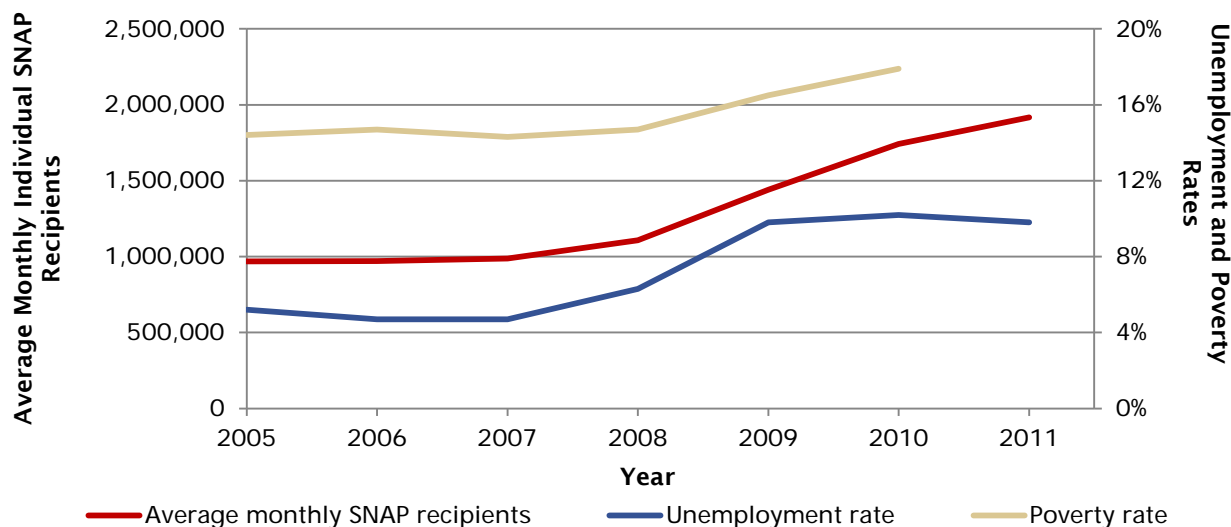
Sources: Participation is based on Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS. Unemployment rates are from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Poverty rates are from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Briefs.

Figure III.8 Percentage Change from 2005 in Monthly Caseloads in Urban and Rural Counties, 2005-2011, Georgia
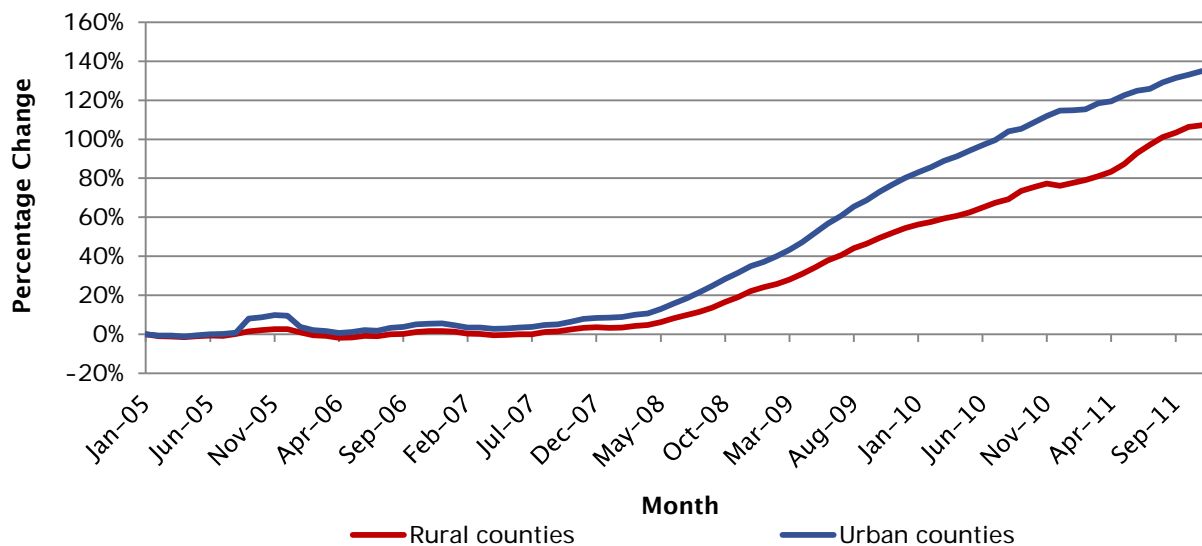
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS.

Access to SNAP also improved during this time (Figure III.9). The state's PAI, which is roughly equivalent to the average number of SNAP recipients per persons with incomes below 125 percent of the federal poverty level, increased from 0.56 in 2005 to 0.75 in 2010. Most of this improvement began in 2008, coinciding with rising caseloads and poverty rates. As Figure III.9 shows, this trend was also seen across the nation.

Figure III.9. Trends in SNAP Program Access Index, 2005- 2010, Georgia
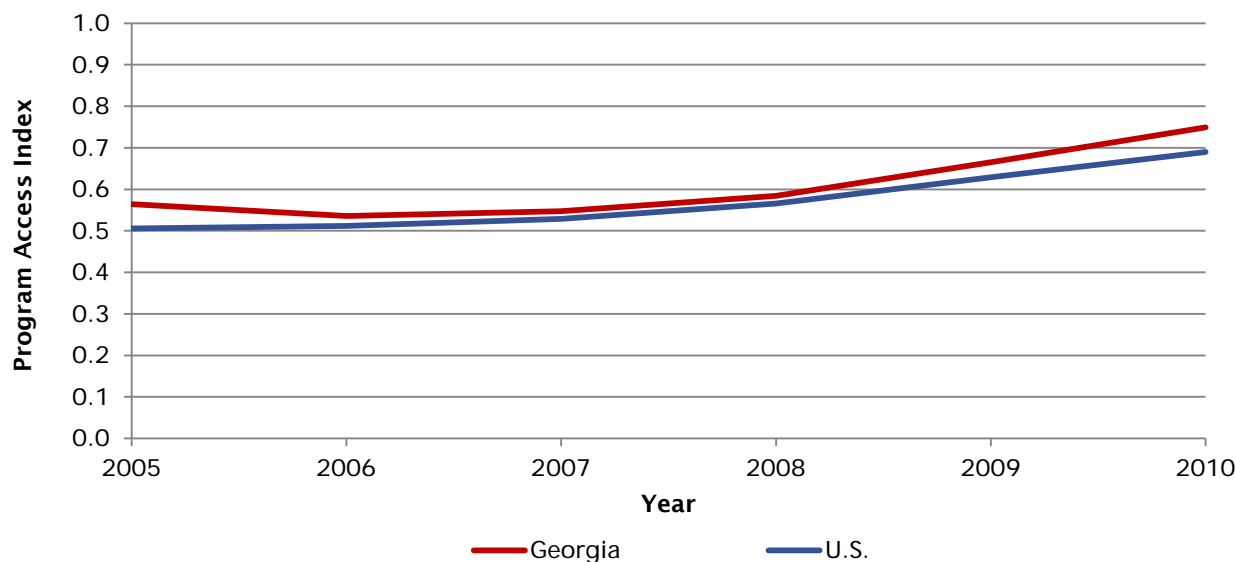
Source: PAI data are from the USDA FNS.

Notes: PAI, a measure calculated by FNS, represents a ratio of the average monthly number of SNAP
             participants over the course of a calendar year to the number of state residents with income
             below 125 percent of the federal poverty level. A higher PAI indicates greater program access.

The ability to access SNAP from any Internet-based computer, coupled with the ability to interview by telephone, might have improved access by lowering barriers. The online application might have opened access for those with computer skills, including students and newly unemployed individuals. Staff reported that those who felt stigmatized by the local office might be more inclined to apply now that they do not have to do so in person. It is possible this group of applicants grew as the recession brought in newly eligible applicants. Access could have also expanded for clients who were willing but unable to easily travel to local offices. The necessity of taking time off from work and a lack of transportation or costs associated with it have been shown by past research to present barriers (Food Research and Action Center 2008; Bartlett et al. 2004).[39] Furthermore, the ability to prescreen for benefits might encourage applications from those who do not realize they could be eligible, which research suggests could deter participation (Bartlett et al. 2004).

The extent to which access-oriented modernization reforms—including the online application released in December of 2008, the online eligibility screening tool, telephone interviews, and expanded categorical eligibility—were responsible for participation growth and improvements in PAI is impossible to disentangle from the increase in need brought on by the poor economy. What is clear, however, is that modernizing SNAP service delivery was virtually a necessity. DFCS officials realized that processing more than twice as many cases without the ability to maintain, let alone increase staff positions, required a more efficient business model. With a limited budget, Georgia

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[39] Bartlett et al. (2004) reported that nearly two-thirds of potentially eligible nonparticipants cited the costs of applying—including the necessity of taking time away from work, dependent care responsibilities, or the difficulty of getting to the SNAP office—as reasons for not applying for benefits.

focused on streamlining policies, reforming staff roles, and providing clients with the ability to self-serve.

There is little evidence that modernization adversely affected access for sensitive populations. Modernization in Georgia raised a question of whether placing greater emphasis on computer- and telephone-based communication, without a dedicated caseworker to guide clients throughout their cases, would serve as barriers to certain demographics, including elderly, Hispanic, or disabled clients. Adults 60 and older represented 6 percent of all SNAP recipients in 2011, the same proportion as in 2005 (Figure III.10) and their numbers have grown continuously since 2007. Participation among Hispanic clients also grew. Between 2005 and 2011, they represented an increasingly larger share of the state's caseload. Growth among participants with disabilities was lower relative to nondisabled participants, but by 2011, about 70 percent more individuals with disabilities had entered SNAP.

Figure III.10. Changes in Characteristics of SNAP Recipients in Georgia, 2005- 2011
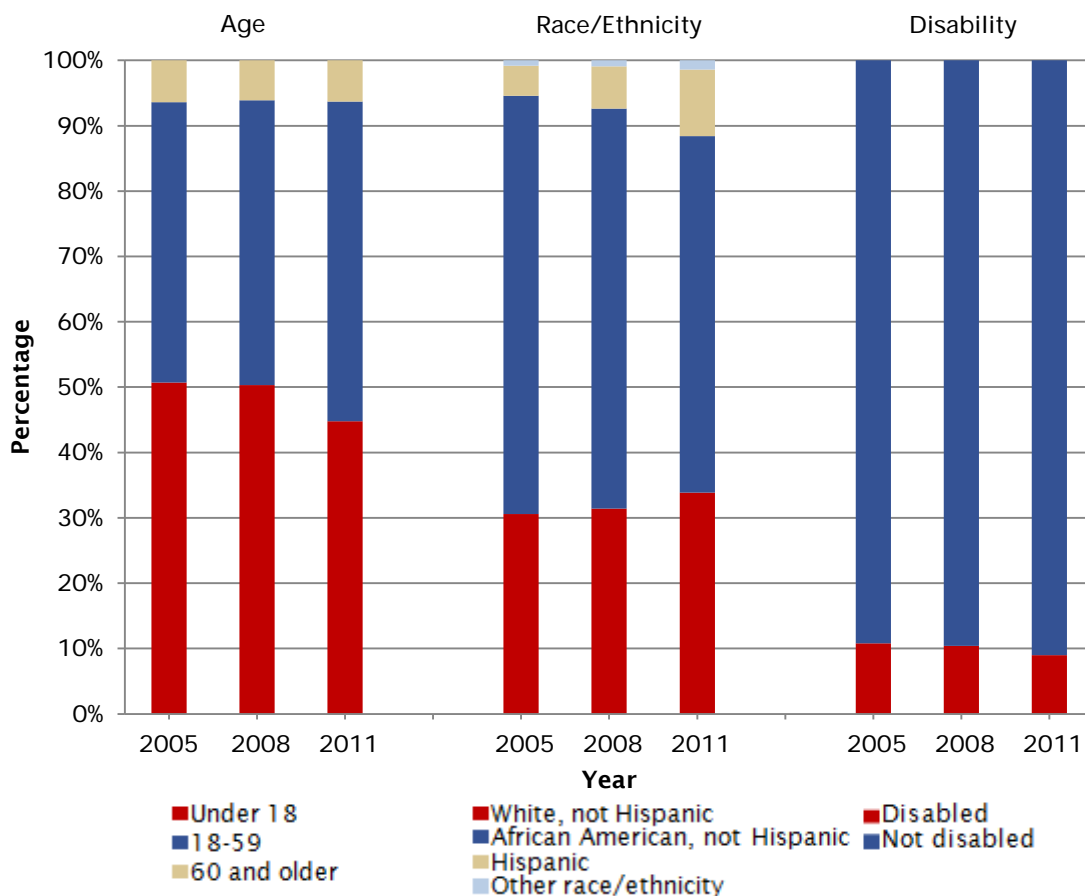
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS.

b.   Application Submissions

Georgia received about 82,000 applications per month in the latter half of 2011, compared with 68,000 in earlier months (Figure III.11). The number of applications submitted rose over time, consistent with the growth seen in caseloads. Because much of SNAP's casework involves

processing applications, applications on this scale provide context for understanding the need to relieve burden on eligibility workers through modernization reforms.

Figure III.11. Applications Processed per Month, 2010- 2011, Georgia
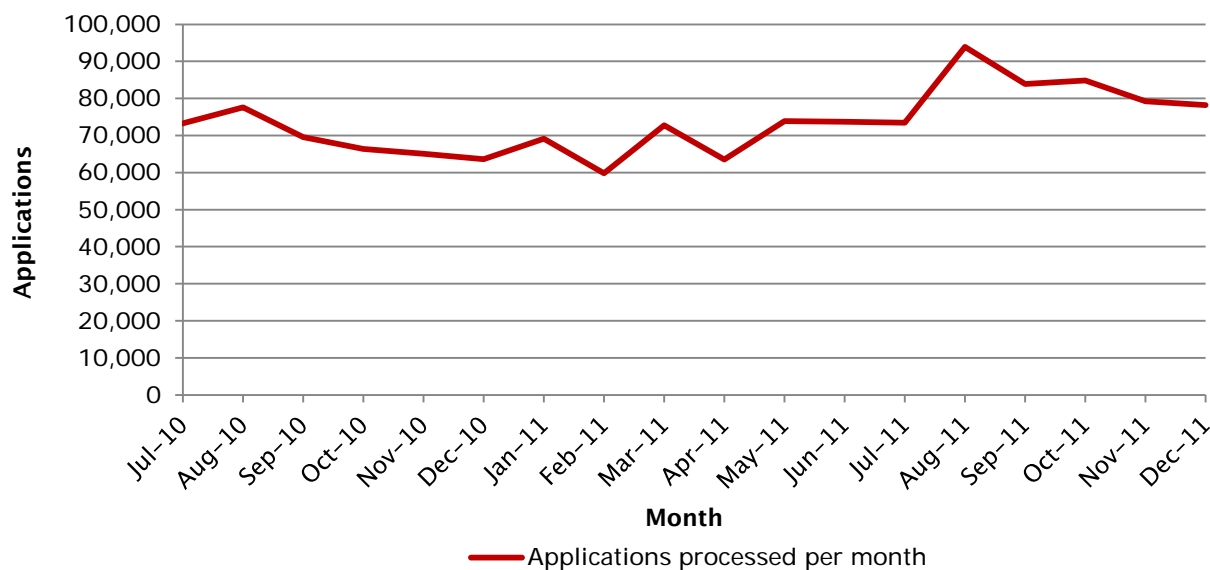
Approval rates were lower for online applicants, which constituted 60 percent of all applicants in 2011. From March to December 2011, 58 percent of online applicants were approved for SNAP benefits, compared with 76 percent of other applicants. This could suggest the ease of applying online encourages more near-eligible households to apply. Overall, approval rates averaged 66 percent from July 2010, when data were first available, to December 2011 (Figure III.12) This amounted to an average of 44,000 enrollees per month.

Application timeliness in Georgia dropped from 92 to 84 percent between July and December 2011 (Figure III.13), coinciding with an additional 4,800 applications. Applications are considered timely if eligibility determinations are made within 7 days for expedited applications and 30 days for all other applications. The average number of days to process an application trended in the opposite direction, with an increase from 13 to 16 days during these months. Although timeliness data were unavailable from the state for earlier years, the small downward trend seen in the average number of days to process an application from July 2010 to May 2011 suggests that the percentage of timely processed applications over this earlier period might have been increasing, despite increases in staff caseloads.

Figure III.12. Approval Rate of SNAP Applications by Month, 2010- 2011, Georgia
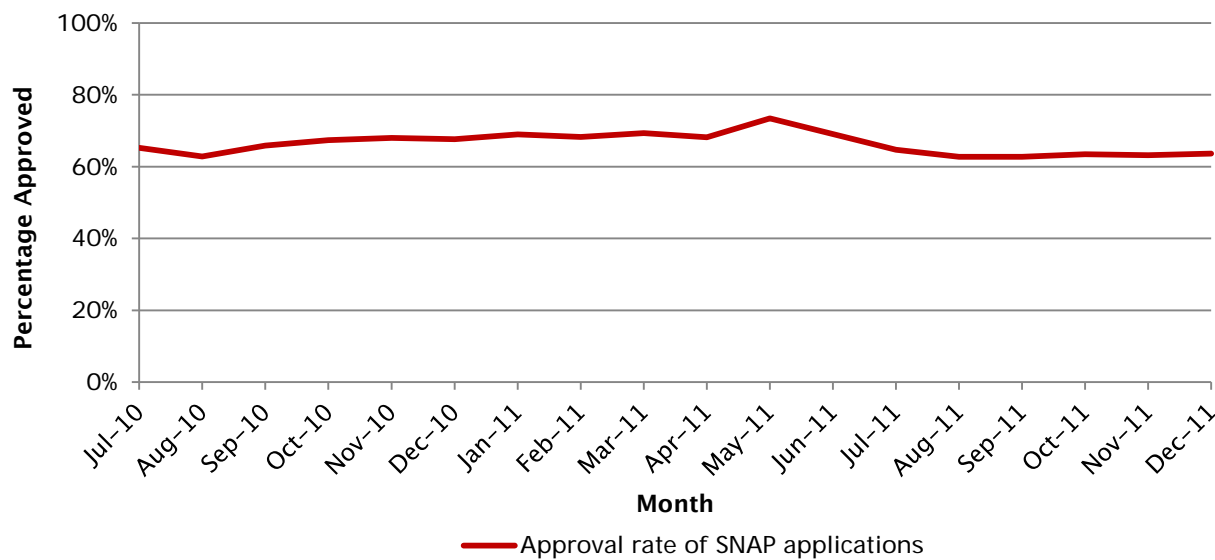
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS.

Note: The approval rate for June 2011 was unavailable. To create this figure, we imputed the value for June 2011 using the average of the values for May and July.

Figure III.13. Average SNAP Application Processing Time and Timeliness, 2010- 2011, Georgia
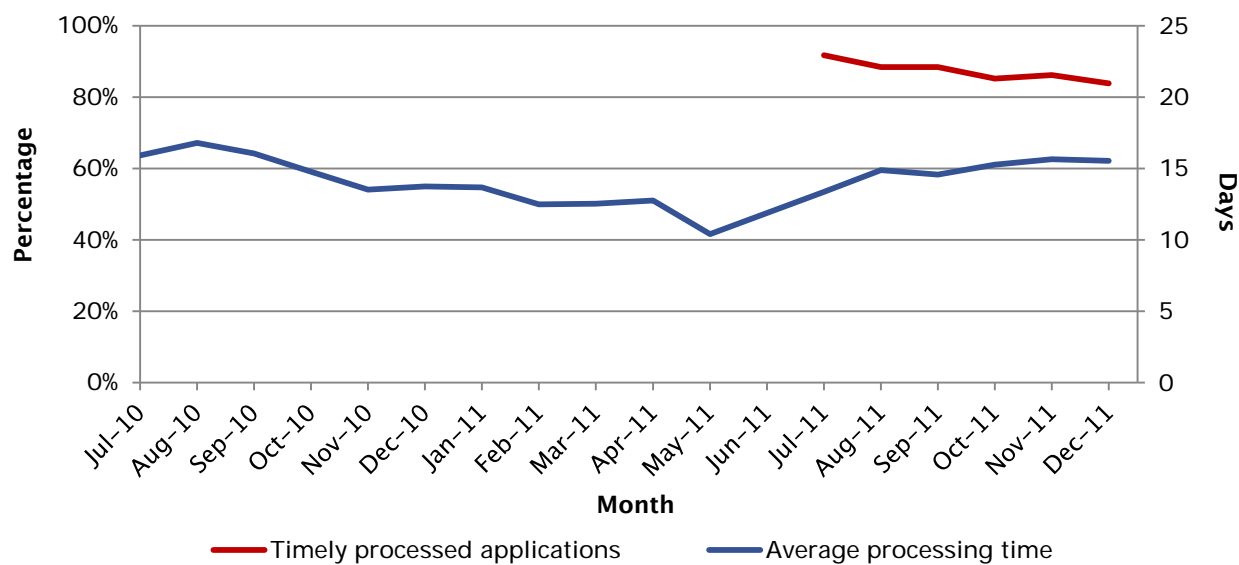
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS.

Note: The average processing time for June 2011 was unavailable. To create this figure, we imputed the value for June 2011 using the average of the values for May and July. Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files. The results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application data provided do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications are included in our calculation of timeliness. Applications are considered timely if eligibility determinations are made within 7 days for expedited applications and 30 days for all other applications.

Processing times varied slightly between urban and rural counties, lending additional support for Georgia's efforts to balance caseloads through statewide centralization. In rural counties, it took workers 13 days on average to process applications, compared with 15 days in urban counties. Ninety-two percent of applications in rural counties were processed in a timely manner, compared with 86 percent of urban applications.

Not all applicants were applying for SNAP for the first time. Eligibility status can change or a client can fail to recertify in time. In the latter case, a client needing food assistance will have to reapply, which puts added pressure on the resources of both clients and workers. In Georgia, such churning increased since 2008, but returned to 2006 levels by 2011 (Figure III.14). In 2011, 24 percent of all eligible applications in a given month were submitted by clients who had received SNAP benefits two months before, and 6 percent had been on SNAP three months before. In other words, 3 in 10 eligible applications submitted could potentially have been submitted as recertifications instead, which are faster to process and ensure clients were not unnecessarily without benefits.

Figure III.14. Trends in SNAP Reenrollment, 2005- 2011, Georgia
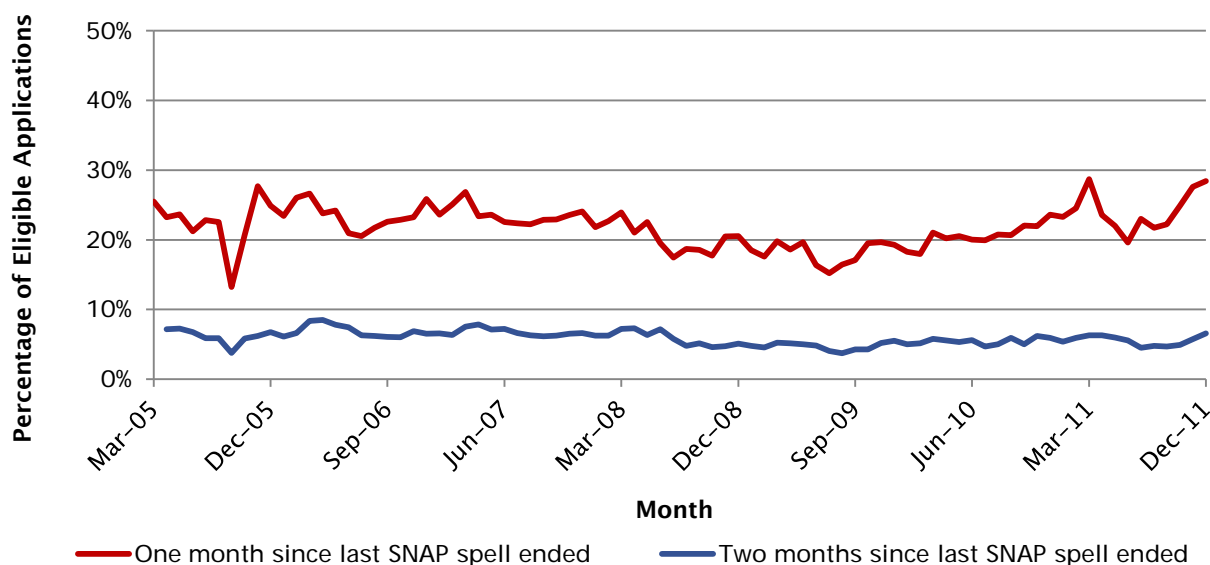
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS.

Note: Percentages are based on the number of households that enrolled in the given month. For instance, 23.4 percent of those who enrolled in January 2006 had previously received SNAP benefits in November 2005, but did not receive benefits in December 2005. Households that stop receiving SNAP benefits and later enroll again are counted as new enrollments.

c.   Client Use of New Points of Contact

Georgia opened two main points of contact for clients: the online system and the call center. Data available on client use of the online application and the call center are discussed in this subsection, in conjunction with reports from staff and clients. In sum, both contact points were increasingly utilized but faced challenges.

Online system. Respondents frequently cited the online application as one of the state's most significant modernization changes—in part because it improves access and increases client self-sufficiency. The online system offers clients a new point of contact from which to prescreen for

possible eligibility, apply, recertify, check their status and benefit amounts, and report changes. Data available on the proportion of applications submitted online illustrate growing use of the online application (Figure III.15).[40] Overall, two-thirds of applications were submitted online in December 2011, up from slightly less than half of all applications in March 2011, when data were first available. Residents in urban counties were more likely to apply online than their rural counterparts. Sixty-one percent of urban applications were submitted online in 2011, compared with only 51 percent of rural applications.

Figure III.15. Percentage of SNAP Applications Submitted Online, 2011, Georgia
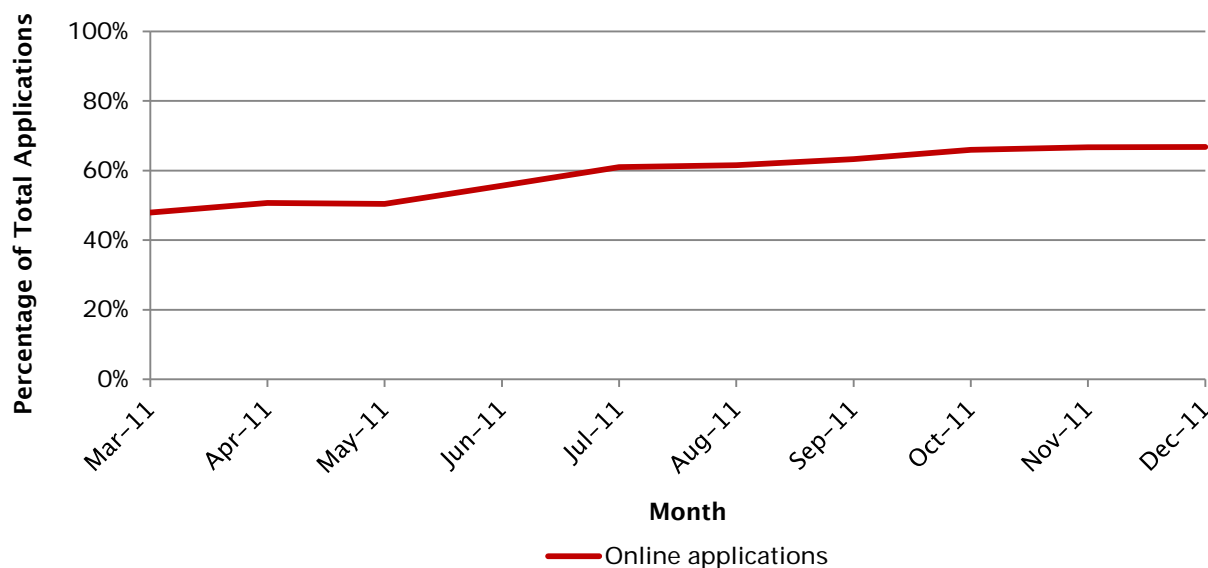
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS.

Note: The percentage of applications submitted online in June 2011 was unavailable. To create this figure, we imputed the value for June 2011 using the average of the values for May and July.

Staff and clients described possible barriers to greater use of the online application and other online tools. In particular, clients lacking computer skills or access would have to continue using paper forms unless they could obtain one-on-one assistance from a local office, family member or friend, or a formal partner or local community partner. It is unclear how common these forms of assistance are. One state official observed that elderly applicants were applying online in comparable proportions due in part to assistance from family members, suggesting computer literacy or access might not be a substantial barrier. On the other hand, staff in one Georgia community emphasized that some clients, particularly in rural areas, mistrust sharing personal information online and even refrain from sharing their private information with someone who could help them at a computer. These barriers could be more prevalent in rural communities. In one rural community, clients who walk in are more likely to apply on paper, whereas in an urban county visited for this study, walk-in clients are encouraged to apply online.

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[40] Data on client use of the online system, including hits to the website and online tools, and the number of clients with an online account were not available.

Staff and community partners recommended two ways to further expand use of online tools: providing more computers in local office lobbies and teaching clients to use computers and the online system. With limitations on staff time, an alternative approach is to build partnerships with local community organizations that have the resources to build clients' computer literacy. At one partner location, a staff member sits with clients one-on-one at a computer as they complete the application, building their computer literacy along the way. Engaging partners to build clients' computer skills could hold promise in the future with the expansion of Registered COMPASS Community Partners.

Call center. Client use of the call center, the second major new contact point, increased more significantly over the years. In 2011, the call center logged 11,440 calls a day on average, or approximately 240,220 calls a month, a 66 percent increase from the year before (Figure III.16). This level of volume represents 3 of 10 active monthly SNAP cases in 2011. On an annual basis, call volume increased an average of 40 percent per year from 2006 to 2011, higher than year-to-year growth in SNAP cases. Staff reported that the majority of calls were related to SNAP, although it is worth noting that since the call center's inception, TANF, Medicaid, and child care clients also use the call center.

Figure III.16. Call Center Performance, 2006- 2011, Georgia
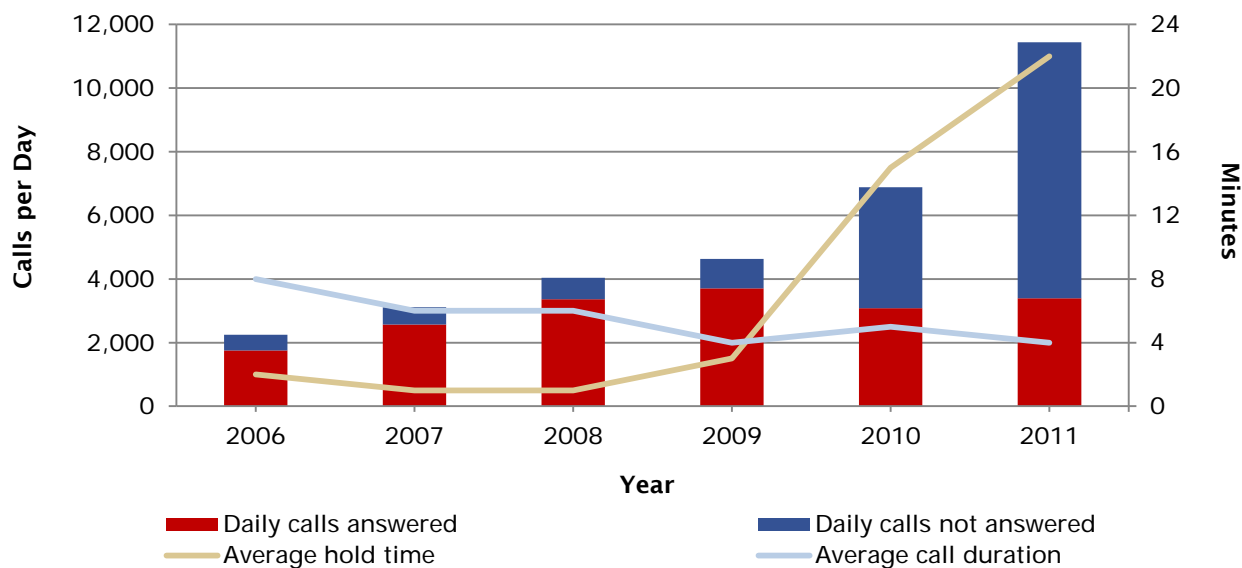
The dramatic increase in call volume has outpaced the ability of the call center to meet demand, as Figure III.16 illustrates. In 2010 and 2011, callers typically hung up or were disconnected before reaching an agent (represented by the blue portion of the column in Figure III.16). Average hold times increased to a peak of 23 minutes in 2011. The wait can be substantially longer during peak call times—Mondays, days after holidays, and lunch times. In 2011, the longest hold time recorded was 3.5 hours; on average, callers waited up to 2.0 hours. Call duration also became shorter, declining from an average of 8 minutes in 2006 to 4 minutes in 2011. Since 2010, callers have spent more time on hold than speaking with an agent. According to call center managers, agents could

spend an hour or so speaking with a single caller until 2005, when they began tracking performance metrics.

Staffing cuts have also contributed to the call center's performance. In 2006, 108 call agents answered 78 percent of calls, or about 2,240 calls per day (Figure III.17). By 2011, 52 call agents were available on a given day to answer 11,440 calls. Only 30 percent of calls were answered, on average, during this year.

Figure III.17. Available Call Center Agents, 2006- 2012, Georgia
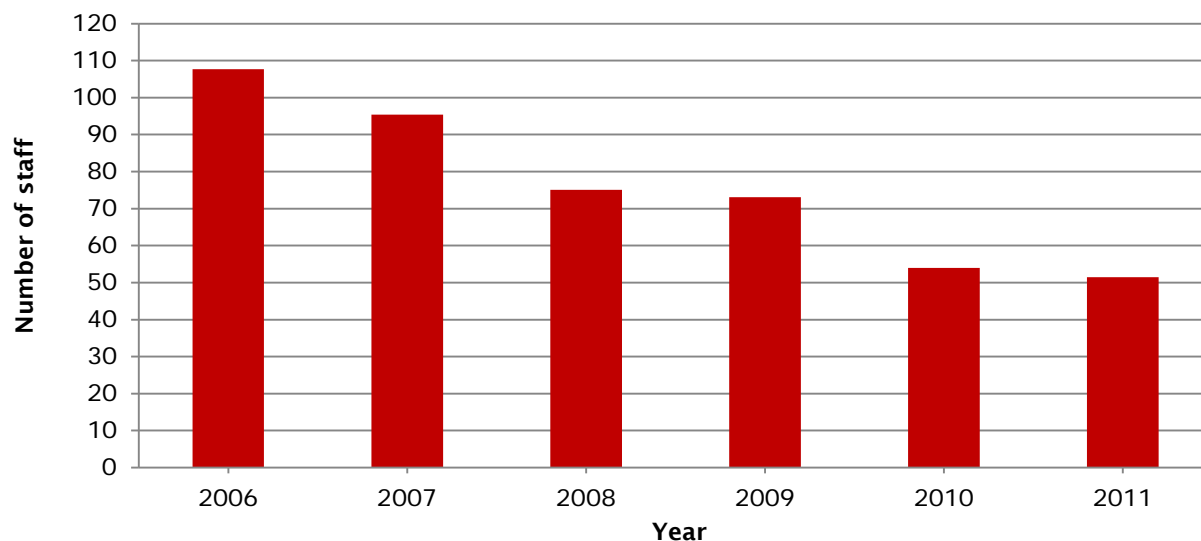
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS.

In addition to caseload growth, increases in call volume can also be attributed to the call center's expanded scope and functions (discussed in Section A). According to call center administrators, the call center can also experience spikes in call volume after changes are made to program operations. Anytime there is a change, they stated, clients call the call center because they feel comfortable talking to someone. For instance, in November 2011, the number of calls more than doubled from the previous month due to concerns about a change in the benefits issuance date and the newly released online benefits renewal tool. Volume was so high that the state resorted to "throttling" or disconnecting callers to avoid system-wide crashes. Disconnected callers called back multiple times, further inflating the number of calls and compounding the problem.

d.   Client Satisfaction

Interviews with staff and community partners, as well as focus groups with clients and eligible nonparticipants, suggest that overall, clients were generally satisfied with the changes Georgia has made. Nonetheless, completing telephone interviews, understanding notices, and for some, navigating the eligibility requirements and application process presented challenges.

Clients who used the online system were, reportedly, generally satisfied. Focus group participants who applied online reported they had a positive experience and found the online application and tools for tracking status, reporting changes, and recertifying convenient and easy to use. Keeping track of their client ID to log-in to their account was a challenge for some, however. As expected, clients who used the online system were comfortable with computers, or sought help

from family, friends, or partners or other community organizations. Among eligible nonparticipants, interest in the online application was mixed. Reports from staff support these findings. Staff expressed that those who used the online system liked it, but not everyone uses it. For those who prefer it, paper applications and recertifications remain an option.

Client satisfaction with recent staffing changes, particularly the shift to a process-based model under GROW, was mixed. Staff estimated client approval of staff specialization—and subsequent loss of a dedicated worker—was 50-50, with long-term and rural clients generally preferring the traditional caseworker model. According to staff in a rural community, having face-to-face, lengthy conversations was a cultural norm. Losing an assigned worker can be particularly frustrating for clients when they encounter challenges. Yet, it is worth noting that clients—and staff—were still adjusting to the GROW model during our data collection period and their satisfaction could evolve over time. Clients were comfortable speaking with a call center agent to report changes and inquire about account information, a shift that occurred a decade or more ago in some parts of the state.

Clients experienced some challenges with telephone interviews, but in general clients, staff, and partners alike recognized that interviewing by telephone relieves clients of the burden of traveling to and waiting at an office. For a few reasons, staff had difficulty reaching clients by telephone for their interviews, either when cold calling clients ahead of their appointment times or during their appointments. Many clients, as well as eligible nonparticipants in one focus group, lacked access to a telephone, could not afford to replenish minutes, or did not maintain the same telephone number for long. Calling past a client's appointment time can also contribute to missed interviews and client frustration, as well as potentially lead to denial of benefits. As one focus group recipient stated: "You [are] sitting waiting all day for a phone call that doesn't come through. I can't pick up the phone and call you and let you know that I am waiting.… The next thing, I'm getting a letter in the mail saying that [my benefits are] terminated."

Clients attempting to call their local office after missing their telephone call or in anticipation of an interview also faced challenges. As with the call center, demand has outpaced the capacity of telephone systems in local offices and available staff. With nearly all interviews conducted by telephone (95 percent, according to one estimate), the number of calls to local offices has risen. Staff reported that even the option for clients to leave a voicemail is untenable because mailboxes fill up quickly. As mentioned in Section A, at the time of this study DFCS was exploring changes to its telephone systems that would expand capacity and enable clients to call for an interview, rather than having staff call clients.

State officials were also taking steps to improve notices informing clients of their eligibility status, interview appointments, and required documentation, which staff, partners, and clients agree can be confusing. For one, staff and partners noted the wording was complex, making it difficult for clients with low literacy levels to comprehend. The notices could also be contradictory, in part because of the costs and time required to implement updates to reflect new policies or procedures. Updating the eligibility system, which automatically generates notices, is expensive and the technology unit responsible for updates has a long queue of work. As an example, it took roughly a year before notices informed clients they could interview by telephone. Telephone interviews became common only after the notices stated this option. After implementing GROW, notices continued to instruct clients to call "your caseworker" or "your worker" with questions or concerns, potentially creating confusion for clients who were not aware they no longer had an assigned caseworker.

Some challenges with understanding SNAP processes in general emerged through focus groups. SNAP recipients participating in the focus groups were aware of major changes that had been in place for a while but were less cognizant of newer ones. Not all clients, for example, realized they no longer had an assigned caseworker. Some staff in local offices pointed out that more could be done to educate clients about changes and recommended spreading information through partners and community organizations. Eligible nonparticipants in focus groups seemed less aware than participants of the state's modernization efforts overall. Some expressed a great deal of confusion with eligibility requirements, and both SNAP participants and nonparticipants felt that the application process was complex.

2. Payment Error Rates

A key goal of modernization in Georgia was to reduce error rates.[41] As illustrated in Figures III.18 and III.19, Georgia's annual payment error rates decreased significantly since 2000, with a decline and then an increase in negative error rates since 2008. Here, too, it is worth noting that payment errors did not worsen as caseloads increased, though the same cannot be said of negative errors. Policy changes and staff restructuring could account for some improvement.

Figure III.18. Trends in SNAP QC Payment Error Rate, 2000- 2010, Georgia
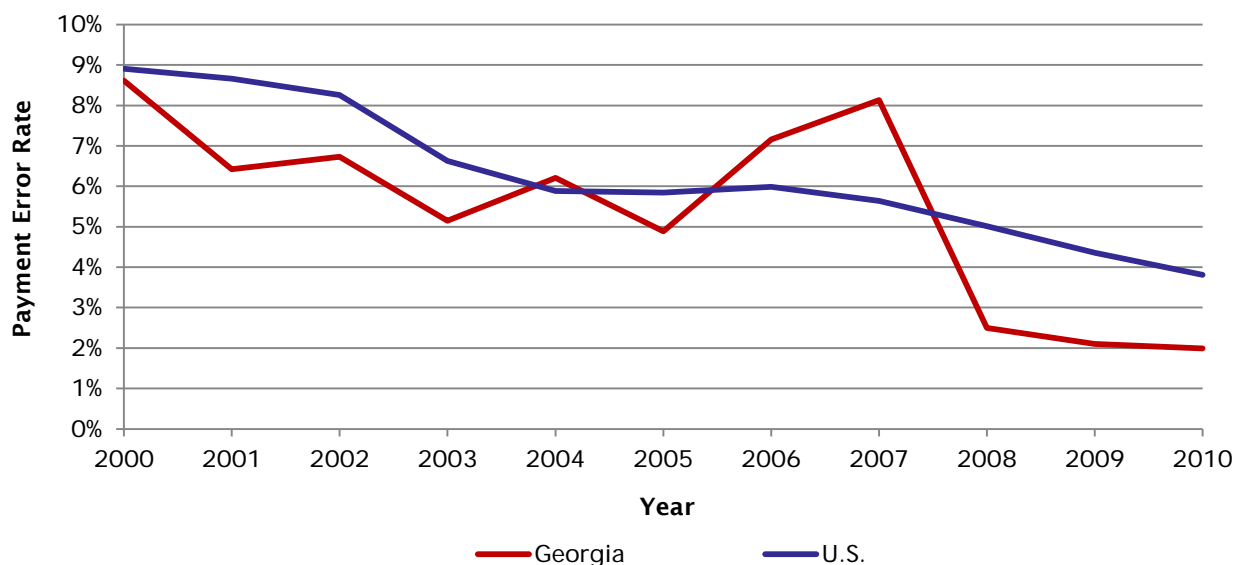
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Georgia's annual payment error rate, which represents the proportion of clients that were awarded benefits either higher or lower than their household circumstances warranted, declined 43 percent (from 8.6 to 4.9 percent) from 2000 to 2005 (Figure III.18).[42] Annual payment error rates

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[41] The FNS QC audit of payment errors is estimated from a sample of cases each month. If the QC reviewer determines that the client is ineligible or should otherwise have a different benefit level, then the case is considered an error.

[42] Inaccurate payment amounts must be off by a certain threshold to be considered an error. The threshold was $50 in FY 2011 and varied in past years.

climbed back up in 2006 and 2007, before dropping to a low of 2.0 percent in 2010. Overall, the state successfully cut its error rate by slightly more than three-fourths over the past decade, despite caseload growth in the past few years. This level of reduction was better than the national average by nearly 20 percentage points. By 2010, Georgia's annual payment error rate was nearly twice as low as the national average of 3.8.

Although the negative error rate in Georgia also decreased, the size of the reduction was smaller than the payment error rate (Figure III.19). Overall, the negative error rate was 20 percent lower in 2010 than in 2000 (15.3 compared with 19.1 percent). Nearly one in every 5 applicants who were denied SNAP benefits in 2000 should have been approved, compared with one in every 6.5 applicants in 2010.

Figure III.19. Trends in SNAP QC Negative Error Rate, 2000- 2010, Georgia
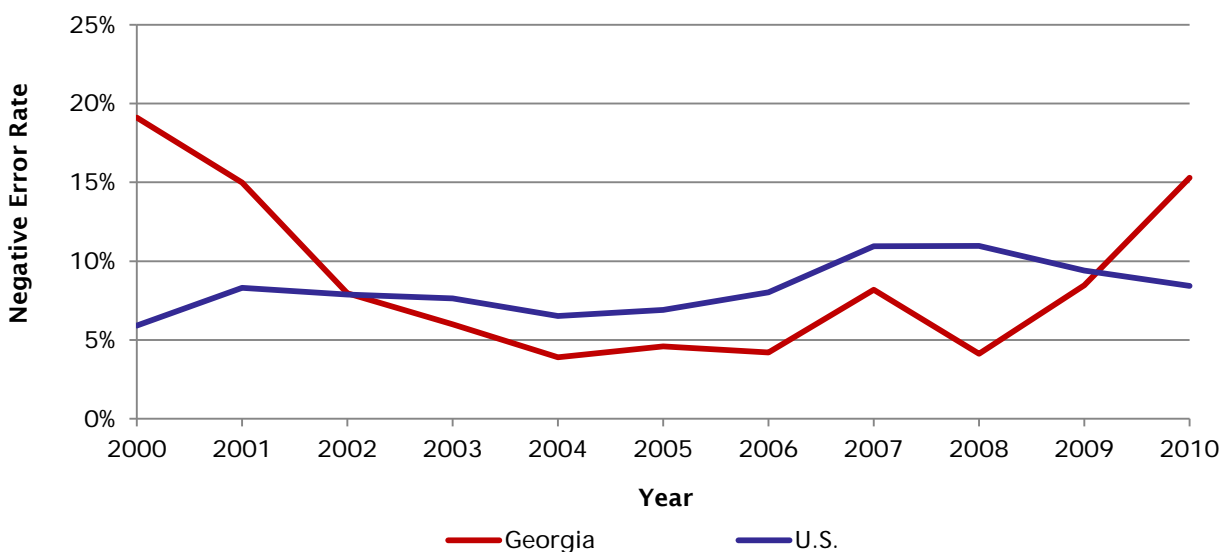
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Although it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about modernization reforms that affected payment and negative error rates, staff responses shed light on the possibilities. Respondents indicated that staff restructuring and certain policy changes, such as broad-based categorical eligibility and reduced verification, might have improved error rates as designed. Reducing the number of criteria with which to assess clients and the amount of documentation to review reduces the number of opportunities for eligibility workers to make mistakes on a given case. In addition, to the extent these changes free workers' time, they are less likely to commit errors while working quickly to meet timeliness standards.

Greater staff specialization might also play a role in reducing errors. Constant focus on a single component enables workers to become more proficient at a particular skill. Now that workers do not carry a consistent caseload, they have fewer interruptions from clients, which also helps to maintain focus and free up time. The earlier shift of some responsibilities to the call center potentially had a similar effect.

Other initiatives could have contributed to an increase in error rates. In the short run, staff might commit errors as they adjust to any change. While shortening interviews from an estimated one hour to about 15 to 30 minutes saves workers time, it also gives them less opportunity to learn

about an applicant. According to frontline staff, QC reviewers interview clients for longer durations. In the process, they might discover details that change eligibility determinations or benefit amounts, which would drive up error rates.

The decision to centralize offices before implementing a document imaging system could have also indirectly increased error rates. At the time of the study, supervisors physically transported paper applications or verification to the appropriate county when making rounds to other offices or when passing by on their commute. Physically transferring files poses risks that verification will get lost or that frontline workers will not have possession of the verification when they need it for interviewing or processing.

Finally, although not a consequence of modernization, staff also mentioned that the stressful conditions accompanying high workloads could have also contributed to error. As discussed elsewhere, caseloads doubled from 2008 to 2010 while the number of workers declined.

3.   Administrative Costs

Georgia successfully lowered its total administrative costs, and by larger proportions than other states in the region and nation. With the budget tight in the wake of the recession, DFCS was obligated to control spending through hiring and wage freezes. Although reducing costs was not a stated goal of modernization in Georgia, its inability to hire staff as caseloads grew drove DFCS to seek reforms that would improve the efficiency of existing staff.

Georgia's total spending on administrative costs declined overall throughout the past decade (Figure III.20). By FY 2011, total spending was 13 percent less than FY 2000 levels, up from a 21 percent reduction the previous year. In monetary terms, the state saved nearly $8.5 million (adjusted for inflation to 2005 dollars) from FY 2000 to FY 2011. In terms of costs alone, it appears that the modernization reforms paid for themselves.

Figure III.20. Percentage Change in Total SNAP Administrative Costs from 2000 Baseline, 2000-2011, Georgia (2005 Dollars)
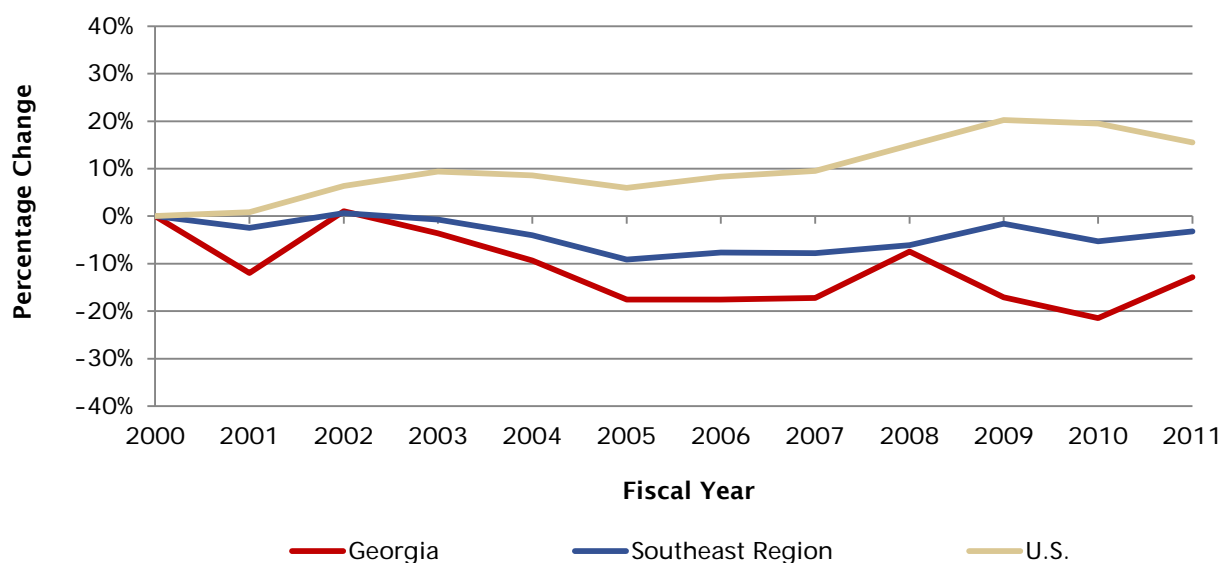
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

To put these savings into perspective, Georgia's total cost reductions outpaced the national average and moderately outpaced the Southeast region. Total administrative spending by the Southeast region as a whole was, on average, 4 percent less than FY 2000 levels throughout the decade, while Georgia's costs dropped by 12 percent, on average. Across the United States, state spending collectively rose 11 percent, on average, and was 16 percent higher in FY 2011 than in FY 2000.

A key measure of administrative efficiency is whether or not costs change proportionately with changes in caseload. Average monthly cost per case—the amount spent administering a single case during one month—decreased significantly when caseloads increased, first from FYs 2002 to 2005 and again beginning in 2008 (Figure III.21). By 2011, the cost of administering a case for one month fell to 75 percent of FY 2000 levels, a 26 percentage point drop from FY 2008, the year in which Georgia began experiencing recession-driven caseload growth. In dollar terms, it cost the state about $6 (adjusted for inflation to 2005 dollars) to administer a case for one month in FYs 2010 and 2011, half of what it cost from FYs 2005 through 2008. Costs per case in Georgia were lower and fell more sharply than in other states in the Southeast region and across the United States.

Figure III.21. Percentage Change in Average Monthly Costs per Case from 2000 Baseline, 2000-2011, Georgia (2005 dollars)
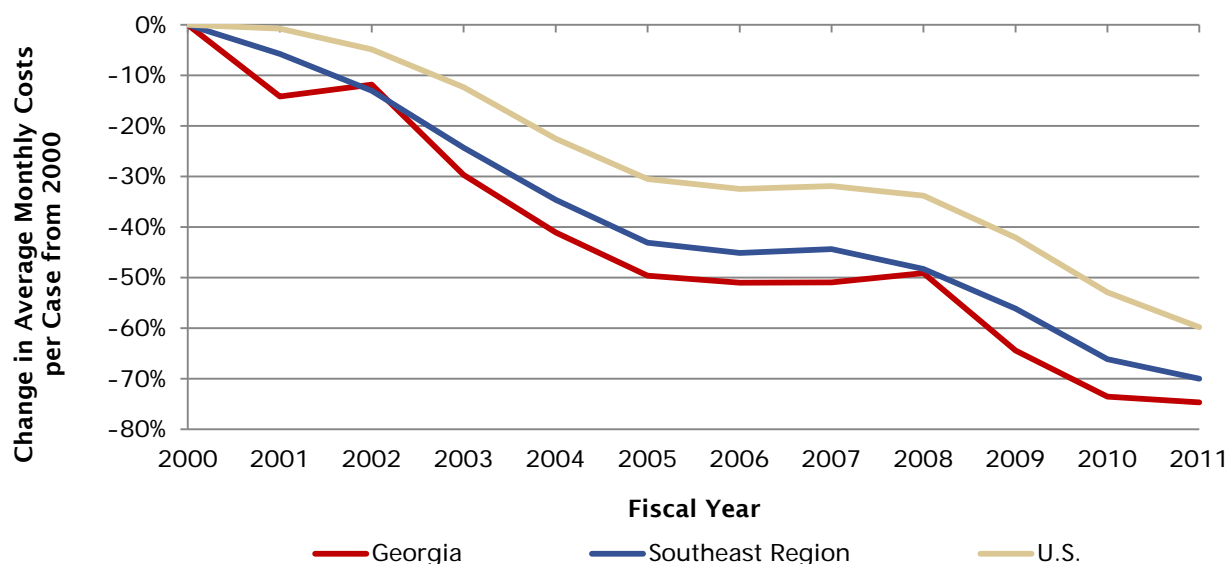
Source: Mathematica tabulations of average monthly costs and average monthly caseloads from USDA, FNS.

Note: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

One reason for the large decline in costs per case is that fixed costs (such as rent) could be spread across a growing pool of clients. In other words, even without modernizing service delivery, costs per case would decline as caseloads increased. Costs per case could also drop due to efficiencies gained from modernization. Unfortunately, data available on costs are not detailed enough to disentangle the two effects.

Throughout the past decade, Georgia's share of SNAP administrative costs was largely devoted to costs associated with certifying and recertifying households (Table III.2). Indeed, certification costs assumed a larger share of state spending (72.1 percent in FY 2011 compared with 58.8 percent in FY 2000) as spending on other categories, including fraud and employment and training, declined.

Table III.2. Allocation of Reported State Share of SNAP Administrative Costs, FY 2000–2012, Georgia (Percent)

Administrative Costs	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Certification	58.8	61.6	58.4	55.8	62.0	66.1	72.9	72.9	72.7	70.1	65.0	72.1
Issuance	2.9	4.0	4.2	5.1	8.0	7.6	7.2	6.9	5.2	5.8	6.2	7.1
Quality Control	0.9	0.9	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.7
Fraud	8.4	9.0	9.3	9.3	6.7	6.0	5.5	5.9	4.9	6.3	5.2	4.0
ADP Operations	13.3	8.9	10.8	12.3	11.4	14.0	9.0	7.8	7.4	8.3	12.7	9.5
ADP Development	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Employment and Training	0.9	1.2	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.0
Outreach	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	1.0	1.2	1.0
Miscellaneous	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.7	1.3	0.9	0.8	0.6
SNAP Education	1.6	1.7	4.3	4.4	1.5	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.8	1.2	2.2	0.0
Unspecified Other	12.3	12.3	12.0	11.9	9.1	4.9	4.5	4.8	5.9	5.4	6.0	4.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

The proportion of funds allocated to issuing benefits also increased, on average, during the same period, whereas the proportion dedicated to automated data processing (ADP) operations vacillated somewhat. Costs for ADP development have remained at zero since FY 2001 despite developing an online system and document imaging; this suggests there might have been an accounting anomaly that combined ADP operations with development. Allocations for outreach began increasing in FY 2008, potentially reflecting SNAP Outreach Grant awards.

Certification costs—the costs associated with processing applications and determining eligibility at certification and recertification periods—fluctuated throughout the past decade. In FY 2011, certification expenditures were 7 percent higher than FY 2000 levels, although on balance across the years, Georgia has spent roughly the same amount on certification since FY 2000 (Figure III.22). Georgia's certification costs grew and shrunk at faster rates than the Southeast region but were comparable by FY 2011, at 107 percent and 110 percent of FY 2000, respectively. Compared with national trends, which show somewhat continuous growth since FY 2000, Georgia's certification costs were more often below FY 2000 levels.

Despite reducing total administrative costs, Georgia's issuance costs slightly more than doubled by FY 2011, possibly due to caseload growth. Issuance costs—the costs associated with disbursing benefits to recipients—were 20 to 150 percent higher than FY 2000 levels between FYs 2001 and 2011 (Figure III.23). Although issuance costs also rose for the Southeast region and across the nation for several years, by 2011, they were lower than FY 2000 levels. Georgia's relatively high issuance costs in 2004 through 2006 might have been the result of an active hurricane season. (Georgia provided expedited assistance to victims or evacuees of Hurricane Katrina.) It is unclear why issuance costs rose in Georgia but declined elsewhere in the region by 2011. Slightly higher caseload growth in Georgia compared to the region since FY 2009 might have played a role, and possibly the way Georgia allocates expenses leaves issuance more likely to absorb the costs that result from caseload increases.

Figure III.22. Percentage Change in SNAP Certification Costs from 2000 Baseline, 2000- 2011, Georgia (2005 Dollars)
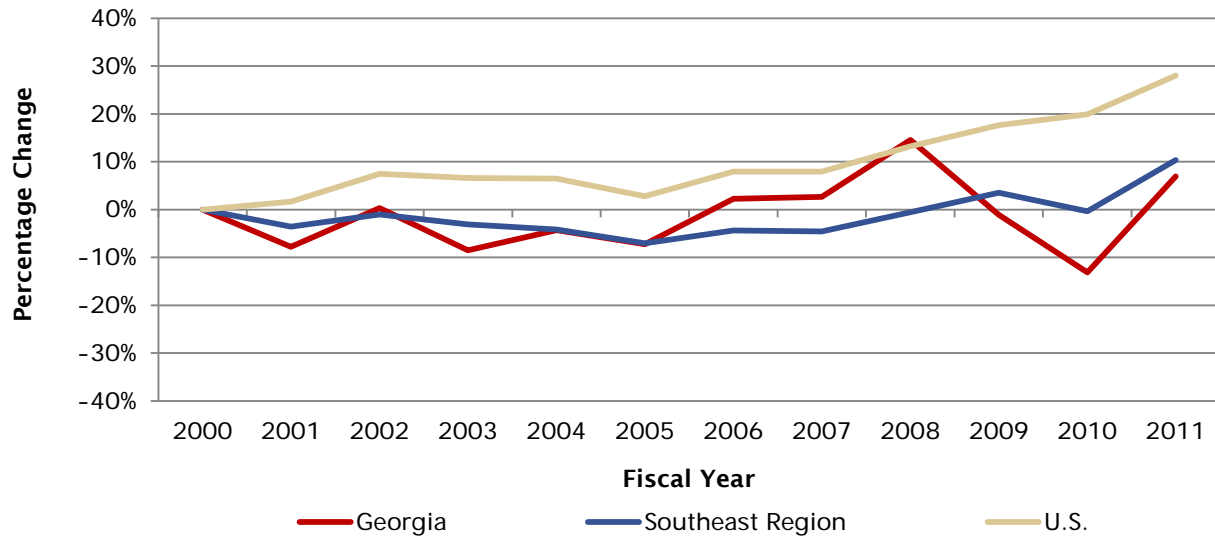
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the USDA FNS.

Notes: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS. Certification costs include the costs associated with processing applications and determining eligibility at certification and recertification periods.

Figure III.23. Percentage Change in SNAP Issuance Costs from 2000 Baseline, 2000- 2011, Georgia (2005 Dollars)
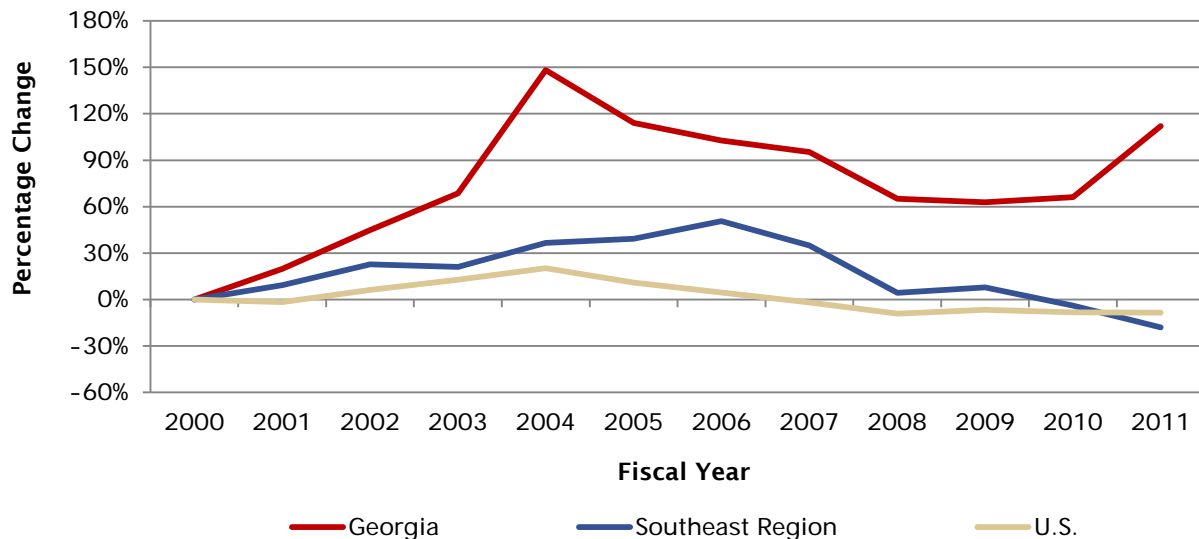
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the USDA FNS.

Notes: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS. Issuance costs are those associated with disbursing benefits to recipients.

4.   SNAP Staff

A declining number of SNAP workers were responsible for managing increasingly larger caseloads since the recession. Staff reports suggest that modernization reforms likely played a role in easing the burdens of larger caseloads. Workers are still adjusting to some changes (especially to GROW) and expect that planned reforms (particularly a document imaging system) will provide additional relief. Reflecting on the ways in which initiatives were implemented, staff suggested that more holistic planning and supportive technology would have been helpful.

a.   Staffing Levels

As a result of budget shortfalls during the recession, Georgia essentially imposed a hiring freeze from mid-2009 through mid-2011, with informal hiring restrictions beginning even earlier (around 2008). No eligibility workers were laid off and no offices closed, but staffing levels declined through attrition. By June 2011, 1,824 Office of Family Independence (OFI) eligibility workers remained, down from 2,482 in June 2007—a 27 percent reduction in frontline workers.[43]

Staff caseloads increased due to declines in staffing levels and increases in cases. In June 2007, there were 154 cases for every OFI eligibility worker.[44] By June 2011, staff caseloads had nearly tripled to 443 cases per worker. Caseload growth on this scale provides clear motivation for reforms to relieve staff burden.

Reports from frontline workers and at least one state-level staff suggest that the stress of high caseloads played a role in increasing staff turnover, further compounding the problem of high caseloads. In addition, one state official estimated that Georgia's state legislature had not approved a wage increase for state employees in the past six years. Staff were also furloughed one day a month during 2011. As one regional administrator stated, "It's a very stressful job … and some people for the pay they receive just aren't willing to do it." At least one state official worried that turnover will increase when better job opportunities become available.

b.   Staff Satisfaction

Staff satisfaction with modernization to date was mixed, with workers reacting negatively and positively to different aspects. Aside from caseload growth, staff restructuring and telephone interviews have been the biggest changes from the perspective of eligibility workers. Indeed, one state director characterized staff restructuring under GROW as a "culture shift," and noted that staffing arrangements were still in flux. In particular, GROW effectively altered what it means to be a social worker. Staff interacted with clients less often or not at all, had fewer in-person interactions, and had less familiarity with a consistent caseload of clients.

Perhaps most importantly, frontline workers and their supervisors generally agreed that these reforms helped them handle the increased volume of work. Focusing on one task instead of one caseload helped to enhance productivity and mitigate stress. Staff now have less to keep track of and

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[43] OFI is the department that oversees SNAP, as well as TANF, Medicaid and Child Care programs. Data is not available for SNAP workers alone, since staff may work on behalf of one or more OFI programs.

[44] Caseload is calculated as the number of active monthly cases (383,429 in June 2007, for example) per OFI eligibility worker.

start the day knowing what exactly they have to accomplish. With less time spent taking client telephone calls and generally interacting with clients, workers also saved time. Some frontline workers reported that they are able to leave work on time since implementing GROW. Even those who preferred the traditional caseworker model appreciate these advantages. One worker even felt that fewer colleagues would have quit if GROW had been implemented sooner.

Despite the clear advantage of increased productivity, however, eligibility workers expressed a few reasons for dissatisfaction with this shift. For some staff, the job was more monotonous and less gratifying. Long-time workers were especially dissatisfied. They missed getting to know their clients and even seeing them around town. As one veteran worker stated, "I don't feel like a caseworker, I feel like a telephone operator." Some staff expressed displeasure at performing the same function day after day (in at least one office, staff rotated positions to prevent monotony). In addition, some staff expressed concerns that reduced in-person interaction makes it more difficult to detect nonverbal cues. Workers used nonverbal cues to perceive when a client was untruthful and to gauge clients' needs to make referrals to other service providers. It is worth noting, however, that not all workers reported that they miss interacting with clients and some preferred focusing on a single function.

Lesser points of dissatisfaction also emerged. In some places, staff were asked to relocate to another office as part of centralization. In at least one county, some staff members quit instead of relocating. In addition, because restructuring requires staff to share caseloads, staff must trust that the previous worker in the chain was thorough and accurate, which some staff described as difficult at first. There can also be duplication of effort due to varying standards for recording case notes. However, the transition to a process-based model occurred relatively recently and administrators continue to explore different arrangements. Thus, staff impressions are likely to evolve over time and might improve as they adjust to the change and work out the early issues.

Staff also reacted to the manner and order in which initiatives were implemented following the dramatic increase in applications. As one state official pointed out, "You have to look at the whole picture. We did what we had to do to survive. Clients are getting their benefits and that's the main thing." In retrospect, however, implementation contributed to the satisfaction level of staff across roles. Although some dissatisfaction was likely unavoidable given the economic circumstances, staff reactions can guide future decisions or decision makers in other states.

In particular, staff expressed frustration with implementing changes before requisite technology supports were implemented. As one state director put it, "What we tried to do is piecemeal the old way of doing things with the new way of doing things, and I don't think that we really recognized all the supports that we needed." The clearest example relates to centralizing local offices before converting to a paperless system via document imaging, which was in the pilot stages at the time of this study. Although staff acknowledged that restructuring was necessary and has helped reduce staff burden, they also noted that the logistics of physically redistributing documents across counties and monitoring work was complex and inefficient. As they also discovered through the online system, planning changes holistically to the extent possible rather than adding components later and delaying a timeline can also help reduce costs, especially when working with a vendor.

Some local staff also identified a need for enhanced workflow management tools and other infrastructure improvements, which state officials were also working to improve during the study period. Workflow processes changed with implementation of a process-based model, but their management tools remained the same. Assigning workers to cases, for example, became more cumbersome. In one location, workers manually tracked multiple lists of case assignments for each

different staff role and emailed the lists across offices; in another office, staff communicated assignments using Google Docs, a web-based collaboration tool. In addition, staff noted there was no automated way to track the status of cases on a daily or live basis statewide.

For some frontline workers, adapting to frequent changes during a period of high volume was overwhelming and frustrating. Additionally, minor decisions were often made after initial implementation as regions and local offices fine-tuned procedures. For example, staff were still experimenting with and refining staffing arrangements under GROW during the study period, although staff acknowledged that flexibility to experiment is necessary for such an undertaking.

Despite improvements under modernization, increased workloads and limited resources arguably remain the most pressing issues for staff in Georgia. Given that the state is in many ways in the early stages of modernization, staff satisfaction will likely continue to evolve as the state moves forward with reforms.

C. Lessons Learned

Georgia's successes and challenges faced in modernizing SNAP delivery offer four lessons for decision makers in the state and elsewhere:

1. **Modernization reforms can help reduce staff burden and error rates, and improve client access.** Staff suggest that modernization initiatives designed to reduce burden and error rates, and improve access have to some degree achieved their goals. Staff take fewer actions per case as a result of policy simplifications, online client self-service, and staff specialization. This enables staff to manage larger caseloads. By focusing on a single task, reducing the number of criteria on which to assess clients' eligibility and the amount of documentation to review, workers save time and have fewer opportunities to make errors. Such policy changes have complemented technological advances in improving client access. In particular, the combination of online applications and waived face-to-face interviews enables clients to enroll without having to travel to their local office, a burden that can present economic costs and other barriers. Clients in Georgia can still apply on paper and interview at their local office if they wish, yet a majority of clients choose not to do so.

2. **Despite the advantages of modernization, more staff could still be needed to manage caseloads.** Resource constraints remained the most vexing problem and source of frustration for both staff and clients. Staff suggest that modernization reforms have helped but have not been a magic bullet. With staff caseloads nearly three times as high in 2011 than 2007, the job remains strenuous and emotionally taxing. For clients, difficulty reaching local offices for an interview or the call center with a question can generate anxiety. Typifying the general sentiment, when asked if any other tools would help manage workload, one staff member replied, "We need more bodies. That would be helpful."

3. **The manner and sequence in which initiatives are implemented matter.** DFCS officials have tended to plan for a particular initiative one step at a time. For the COMPASS online system, this meant conceiving of and adding enhancements one after another, which state officials believe resulted in higher costs. From the perspectives of regional and frontline workers, implementing changes incrementally or before procedures were fully developed can leave them responsible for determining day-to-day procedures as they go, which can decrease their productivity and add to their stress.

Implementing a change before supporting technology is in place can also lead to inefficiencies and frustrations. For example, according to regional managers, supervisors, and frontline workers, centralizing ahead of document imaging increased the potential for errors and delays.

4. **Seeking field expertise and buy-in from frontline workers can smooth implementation.** State staff in Georgia learned to utilize field experts at state and local levels in early planning and testing phases. They recognized that having field expertise at the table is important for understanding how proposed technology or policy changes, for example, will interact with existing business practices. In addition, administrators in two regions emphasized the importance of seeking input from frontline workers during a staff reorganization to obtain staff buy-in and plan logistics. "A lot of times your frontline staff know so much more about it than your upper management, because they do it every day, and can think of good ways that would probably streamline things and make the job a lot easier…."

5. **Formal partnership structures might be needed to utilize community resources.** DFCS staff considered all public and private agencies with shared goals and overlapping clientele to be their partners. However, two informally connected organizations we met with reported struggling to build relationships with local office staff and did not know who to turn to with questions or complex client cases. Although based on only two interviews, this suggests generating a reliable avenue for communication might be difficult through informal partnership structures. To best take advantage of the community resources available to assist clients and help them understand how changes affect them, formal partnerships and communication structures (such as giving partners a designated liaison) might be necessary.

IV. CASE STUDY OF MODERNIZATION: MASSACHUSETTS

The primary goal of modernization efforts in Massachusetts has been—and continues to be—to increase program access for all eligible individuals. Massachusetts had the lowest rates of program participation among eligible households in the nation during the early part of the 2000s (Schirm and Castner 2002; Castner and Schirm 2004, 2005a, and 2005b). In response to what one state[45] official called the "dismal participation rate," state agency officials and regional managers made a strategic decision to concentrate much of their efforts on two key areas that they believed could produce the quickest results. Specifically, they looked to develop strong partnerships with community organizations and sister agencies to improve outreach. They also pursued every policy option that could reduce barriers and limit burden on all potential clients, especially those that were underserved. By 2009, the last year for which participation data were available, Massachusetts had risen to 24th in the nation in terms of SNAP participation rates (Cunnyngham 2011).

State program leaders also recognized that their efforts to increase access to SNAP might also help improve the efficiency of the program by reducing burden on both clients and eligibility workers. This secondary goal has taken on increasing importance over the years as the state's SNAP caseload has increased dramatically. To this end, after having implemented policy changes and several partnerships with other organizations in an effort to improve SNAP participation rates, the state is now headed toward greater restructuring of administrative functions and seeking out a more comprehensive approach to making improvements to its technology. However, despite specific initiatives having explicit goals, the overall approach to modernization in Massachusetts lacked coordination and focus across initiatives and across time.

During this period of moderate-scale modernization changes from 2003 to early 2012, Massachusetts experienced some concurrent trends in outcomes (for instance, applications and caseloads rose, but application processing time and timeliness suffered when staff availability did not increase at the same rate). Disentangling these trends during the modernization period from the effects of the recession is difficult, however. Senior agency officials believe the increase in caseloads is due in part to the state's success in improving client access to SNAP, as well as a consequence of the poor economic climate that has affected the entire nation since 2008 (Figure IV.1).

This chapter provides a detailed description of modernization efforts in Massachusetts, including the context for the changes and how the new procedures appear from the client perspective. Next, it describes some outcomes related to the FNS goals of access, accuracy, and satisfaction. The chapter closes with a discussion of lessons learned from the Massachusetts experience.

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[45] Massachusetts is a commonwealth rather than a state. However, for ease of reference and comparison across sites, we use the term state throughout this chapter and elsewhere in the report when referring to Massachusetts.

Figure IV.1. Number of Cases per Month, 2003- 2011, Massachusetts
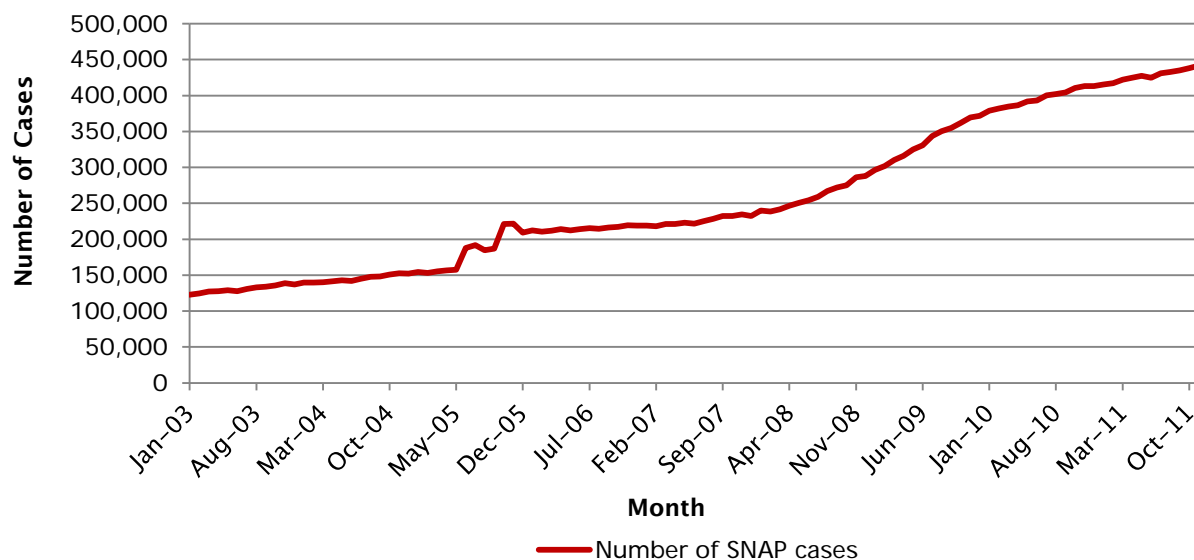
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA).

Note: In 2005, the number of applications (and, then, the number of cases) surged in June and October, reflecting the influx of Social Security Income (SSI) recipients onto the SNAP rolls during the first phase of the Bay State Combined Application Project.

A. Description of Modernization

To date, Massachusetts has focused its modernization efforts on changes to its policies and partnerships. The state Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), which administers SNAP, has continuously reassessed policies and procedures to improve access and reduce burdens on clients and eligibility workers. DTA has also actively pursued partnerships with local community organizations and sister agencies, to enhance outreach activities and provide application assistance to underserved populations.

In this section, we outline the approach to modernization in Massachusetts (including the roles of DTA and other stakeholders and a summary of the status of modernization efforts) and provide a detailed description of modernization efforts in each of the four categories of focus for this study. We also provide a sketch of the current, modernized process from the perspective of a client. (The Massachusetts profile, Appendix I.3, contains additional details about each modernization change.) Figure IV.2 shows a map of the state, indicating site visit locations (we also visited Boston, the state capital) and other notable locations that figure in the modernization description that follows.

Figure IV.2. Sites Visited in Massachusetts and Other Notable Cities
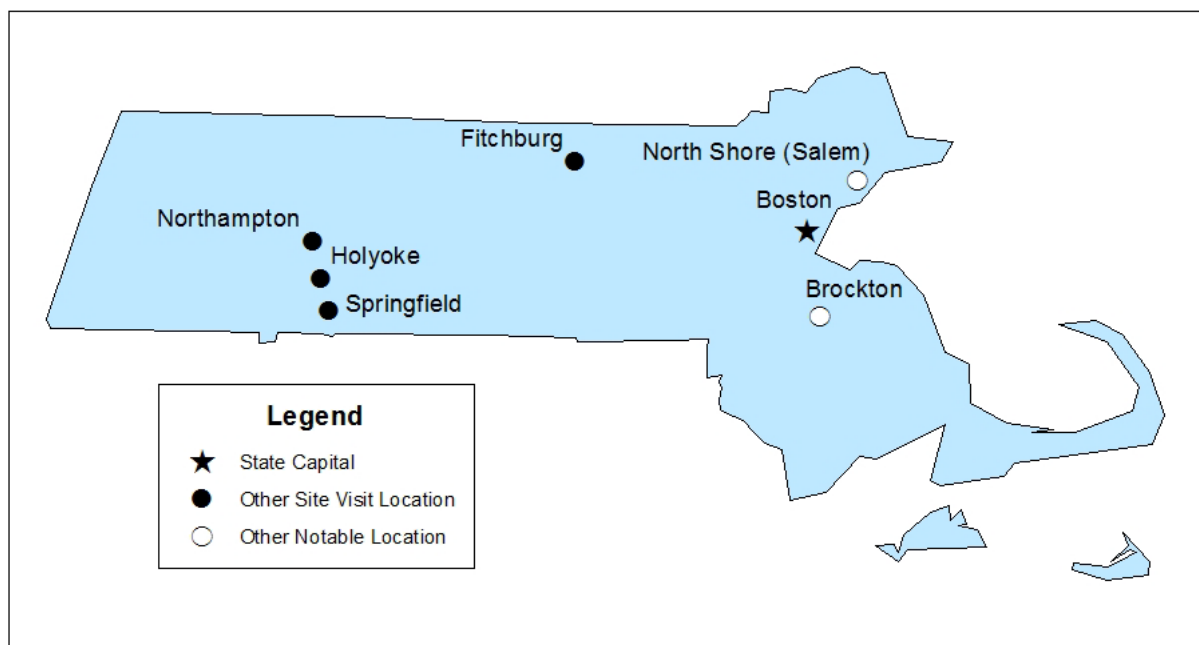
Note:　　Brockton was the site of a piloted call center and North Shore (Salem) was the site of a document imaging pilot, but these locations were not visited for the study.

1.　Approach to Modernization

Massachusetts pursued the use of community partnerships to increase access. Several community organizations and other state agencies were already working with and trusted by potential clients in local areas. DTA sought to capitalize on these existing relationships and partnered with organizations to educate potential beneficiaries and assist eligible individuals in applying for SNAP. Now, according to local office managers and staff, the applications and verifications submitted via community partners are often more complete than those submitted by clients not assisted by community organizations, which speeds the workflow of an eligibility worker.

In Massachusetts, DTA also systematically pursued various policy options that would make the biggest impact on reducing barriers to access. Most policy changes that were implemented to increase program access by eliminating unnecessary steps (for example, eliminating the asset test, streamlining verification requirements, instituting a standardized medical expense for elderly clients, and accepting self-declarations without verification) and reducing burden on clients (for example, shorter applications, telephone interviews, and waiver of interviews at recertification for elderly clients), also reduced the burden on eligibility workers, according to both local office supervisors and eligibility workers themselves.

Other modernization efforts in Massachusetts are just beginning or have not yet been implemented. Although DTA has pursued some technology improvements and restructuring of administrative functions, these have not been a comprehensive focus of modernization. Some pilot initiatives have been slow to expand across the state or were discontinued. For example, a call center was piloted in one local office (Brockton) in 2007 after a legislative mandate required the agency to do so. It never evolved into a statewide component of a broader administrative restructuring as call centers have done in other states; instead, it was suspended in August 2010.

State staff and regional directors reported that they wished DTA would approach these key modernization areas more systematically, and that historically the state's pursuit of changes in each of these areas did not follow a well developed, comprehensive plan. In their view, moving toward holistic change in the state's technology and administrative structure might be the only way the state will be able to address the pressing issue of rapidly rising caseloads. Staff particularly expressed a desire for two future changes:

1. **Document imaging.** DTA staff at all levels reported that they hope to have a document imaging system that can move the agency to an electronic case filing system.

2. **Restructuring staff roles.** Recent efforts to separate some local offices' eligibility worker functions into intake and ongoing case maintenance has raised hope that the agency can continue to innovatively restructure functions within a framework agreeable to the eligibility workers' union and consistent with applicable laws.

The overall direction of modernization efforts in Massachusetts, as well as the decision making and planning for specific initiatives mainly has been the responsibility of state agency staff (representing the policy concerns) and regional directors (representing program operations). The state also created new positions, such as assistant SNAP director for outreach, which it established in 2004 to further develop partnerships with community organizations. Local office staff generally were not involved in the decision making or planning processes. One local office manager criticized this exclusion of eligibility workers because "that is where the impact of those decisions [is] felt most." An exception to this top-down approach was the effort to separate intake and ongoing case maintenance activities, which involved local office staff in planning implementation. During this change process, eligibility workers could identify their preferences for performing either intake or ongoing case maintenance responsibilities.

Along with staff direction, modernization choices by DTA are influenced by several active stakeholders:

- The state legislature often guided DTA using directives embedded in annual appropriation legislation, including (since 2007) requirements to (1) fund specific advocacy and outreach activities, (2) implement specific policy changes, and (3) develop certain technology initiatives. One specific legislative mandate ensured the agency would "not require [SNAP] applicants to provide re-verification of eligibility factors previously verified and not subject to change."

- Food and nutrition advocacy groups—many of which are key program partners—such as Project Bread and the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts actively advocate for policy and administrative changes on behalf of the populations they serve, and may encourage innovation. (For instance, Project Bread developed an online application for benefits in 2001 that it shared with DTA, forming the basis for the current DTA online application.)

- Legal advocacy groups, such as the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, seek reforms (through litigation and administrative or policy advocacy) to improve access to benefits and to actively challenge policies that they deem to be harmful to low-income, at-risk individuals, such as a reduction in the standard utility allowance.

- Internally, DTA must also work closely with its strong, active union that represents eligibility workers. According to its leadership, the union seeks to protect the number of

jobs held by its members, as well as the integrity of the positions themselves. This can constrain DTA's ability to pursue fast-paced, sweeping administrative restructuring because it must negotiate all changes with the union.

2. Summary of Changes, by Category

a. Restructuring of Administrative Functions

DTA has taken incremental steps to restructure administrative functions. The main restructuring activities can be classified into two categories:

1. **Technology-based restructuring.** The state has piloted (and subsequently closed) a local call center (Brockton Call Center), instituted a limited-function statewide call center, and created two web application units (WAUs) to support processing of online applications for offices in some parts of the state.

2. **Specialization of staff functions.** The state has focused on the types of work that staff in local offices perform (for example, a piloted and then expanded effort that separates the intake and ongoing case maintenance activities that eligibility workers perform) and the location at which staff serve clients (for example, outstationed eligibility workers).

Next, we describe each restructuring effort, beginning with the supports for technological enhancements and then moving to the specialization and location of local office staff (Figure IV.3). Notably, despite some restructuring efforts, the assignment of tasks across staff in Massachusetts remained somewhat complex, with different types of staff in different roles often having overlapping functions (Table IV.1).

Figure IV.3. Summary of Changes to Administrative Functions, Massachusetts

Description of Activity	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Call Center[a]						
Answer general questions						
Provide account information						
Specialization and/or Centralization of Staff for:						
Processing online applications (WAUs)						
Intake or ongoing cases						
Outstationed Workers						
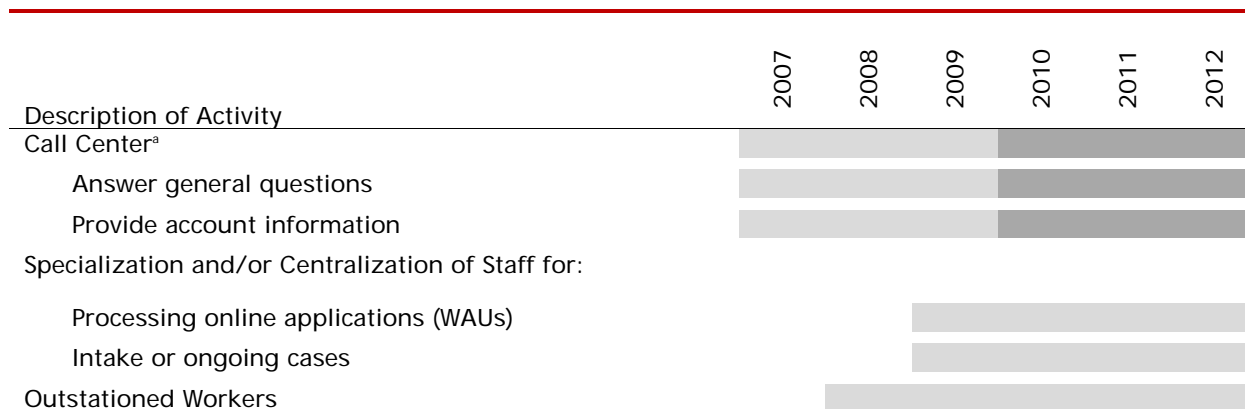
Source: Information reported to Mathematica by the Massachusetts DTA.

[a] The Brockton call center was piloted in one local office from 2007 until 2010. That pilot call center was closed, but in 2010 another statewide call center emerged.

☐ Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.

☐ Initiative in statewide implementation.

Table IV.1. Client Service Functions, by Staff Type

Function	Call Center (Pilot)	Call Center (Statewide)	Web Application Unit	Intake Worker	Case Maintenance Worker	Typical Caseworker	Outstationed Worker
Answer General Questions	X	X		X		X	X
Answer Case Status Questions	X			X		X	X
Initiate Application Processing	X		X (Web only)	X		X	X
Eligibility Interview				X		X	X
Verify Application Information				X		X	X
Determine Eligibility				X		X	X
Act on Change Reports					X	X	X
Recertification Interview					X	X	X

Source: Information reported to Mathematica by the Massachusetts DTA.

Technology-based restructuring. Unlike other states, Massachusetts' experience with using call centers in the application process was small in scale and short-lived. In response to a state legislative mandate to implement a call center, Massachusetts piloted a call center in its Brockton local office in 2007. It was originally staffed by five eligibility workers and one manager and served two separate functions: (1) responding to questions about the program, application status, and ongoing cases; and (2) processing applications received via mail, fax, drop-off, or online via Virtual Gateway (VG).

At first, when processing applications, Brockton call center workers entered application data into the state's online eligibility and benefits determination system, the Benefit Eligibility and Control Online Network (BEACON); made initial telephone contact to screen applicants for hardship and expedited status; and assigned the application to another eligibility worker in the local office to complete the eligibility determination process. Later, Brockton call center staff were also responsible for eligibility determinations on expedited cases.

The Brockton call center's operations were suspended in August 2010, when the office encountered significant problems with its key data transmission lines. A number of call center staff were temporarily transferred to the central office until the technical issues could be resolved. Yet when the Brockton call center staff did return, they were merged with the rest of the local office staff to address a significant backlog of applications—the Brockton office no longer operates a call center. The former call center staff were assigned responsibility for processing all incoming applications, which enabled the other eligibility workers to handle ongoing case maintenance and focus on a large backlog of recertifications.

A more limited, but statewide, call center currently operates in the Boston central office. Unlike call centers in the other four study states, this call center does not play a role in the eligibility determination process. Instead, its main functions are to (1) respond to basic inquiries about the program, (2) refer clients to their assigned eligibility workers, (3) notify the eligibility worker about any communication with a client, and (4) provide copies of any notices to clients upon request. The statewide call center is staffed by seven workers, one supervisor, and one manager, and it handles up

to 10,000 calls per month. Statewide call center staff responsibilities are limited, however, because they are not members of the eligibility workers' union and are therefore prohibited from performing any eligibility determination functions.

In addition to call centers, Massachusetts developed WAUs to assist with processing online applications. Two WAUs were formed in December 2009 to process the online applications more efficiently.[46] Agency staff believed that dedicated processing of VG applications would reduce workloads in local offices, freeing local staff to address their increased mail and lobby traffic.

One WAU was established in Boston's central office to cover local offices in the eastern part of the state. This WAU, which is physically separated from other central office staff and functions, initially processed the online applications for three Boston-area local offices. The central office WAU has since expanded to cover six local offices.[47] At the time of our visit to the central office WAU in November 2011, the WAU was staffed by 16 workers. According to managers, each worker received between 25 and 30 web applications per day, but processed only 15, creating a backlog of online applications.

The other WAU was created in the Springfield local office to cover three offices in western Massachusetts.[48] The Springfield WAU is fully integrated with the rest of the local office. When the need arises (such as during snowstorms or other emergencies), this WAU has taken the online applications from other offices in western Massachusetts. Those offices have a dedicated person who is responsible for retrieving VG applications and assigning them to an eligibility worker. When we visited the Springfield WAU in February 2012, the office was staffed by 18 workers. Unlike the Boston WAU, the Springfield WAU received only 25 to 35 applications per day for the office as a whole. As such, they did not generate a backlog.

For the most part, WAU procedures are similar. In both WAUs, clerical staff retrieve the VG application, confirm it is not a duplicate, resolve basic identity issues (for example, correct bad Social Security numbers), print a hard copy, and create a case file. The clerical staff then assign the case to an eligibility worker who conducts the interview, obtains verifications, and determines eligibility. In the central office WAU, the eligibility workers only handle online applications. In the Springfield WAU, the online applications are assigned to the next available eligibility worker because no specific staff are dedicated to online applications. In both units, when an eligibility determination has been made on an online application, the case typically will be transferred to the originating local office.[49] Local offices not covered by either of the WAUs, of which there are 13 statewide, process their own online applications.

Specialization of staff functions. In Massachusetts, administrative functions were also restructured by separating the intake and ongoing case maintenance functions. This approach began in 2009 in the Holyoke local office and then expanded to the Fitchburg office shortly thereafter.

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[46] DTA has had an online application since 2004, when it deployed the component of the online application used by community partners conducting application assistance, known as the Virtual Gateway Provider View.

[47] Revere, Dudley Square, New Market Square, Brockton, North Shore, and Malden.

[48] Springfield (the State Street office); Holyoke; and, Greenfield.

[49] At the time of our site visit in February 2012, the Springfield WAU retained the applications approved for the Greenfield local office.

DTA then negotiated with the eligibility workers' union to expand the initiative to 12 additional offices (for a total of 13 of the 22 local offices) in January 2012.

In this model, intake workers handle a case from the point of application through eligibility determination, including conducting interviews, obtaining all necessary verifications, and making the final eligibility determination. Case maintenance workers are responsible for approved and active cases and they handle all recertification and case maintenance activities, such as change reporting on income, address, family size, and so on. Separating intake and ongoing case maintenance functions was intended to make the workflow more efficient so eligibility workers could handle their record high caseloads.

To reach key populations who might not be fully aware of SNAP or who are unsure of their eligibility for benefits, state staff chose to outstation some eligibility workers. Since August 2008, DTA has outstationed SNAP eligibility workers from nearby local offices, placing them one to two days per week in satellite offices and outreach centers located within community health centers, senior centers, and other local community partners. Outstationed workers, who operate under a traditional case management structure, can perform the same tasks as caseworkers assigned at the local office. At the time of this report, workers were posted at four satellite offices were in areas that are not readily accessible to local offices and at eleven outreach centers. Those numbers have fluctuated as DTA and its partners reassess the most effective mix of outstationed workers to serve targeted populations.

Other efforts to restructure administrative functions are limited in Massachusetts. State legislation and union contract negotiations limit substantial realignment of eligibility workers' roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, Massachusetts lacks some complementary technologies, such as document imaging and a fully functioning electronic case file system, which have provided flexibility for comprehensive administrative restructuring in other study states. Finally, although four local and three regional offices have closed since 2005, long-term leases limit the state's ability to relocate or consolidate staff on a coordinated basis.

b. Expanding Uses of Technology

DTA's most visible technology innovation was the development of an online application, the VG, which is a part of a department-wide website. This tool has three core components.

1. **The VG provider view.** This component enables a community partner to log in to the online application to assist an applicant in completing it; it also has several standard reports that enable the partner to view the status of the applications their staff helped to complete. DTA first made the provider view of its online application available to authorized users from community partners, local advocates, and primary health providers in August 2004 (Figure IV.4). The original intent of this feature was to provide partners the ability to submit online applications on a client's behalf, rather than doing so on a paper version. The VG provider view was fully implemented (with some enhancements relative to the 2004 version) in September 2005.

2. **The VG consumer view.** This component is accessible to the general public; it was piloted in February 2006 and expanded statewide in November 2007. The VG consumer view is designed for SNAP applicants and is the public version of the online application. It enables an applicant to create an account so he or she can start an application in one session and return to complete it in another. Electronic signature capability was added to

the online application in July 2007. A self-service screening tool is also available as part of VG, enabling users to determine anonymously whether they are eligible for SNAP and other programs.

3. **A My Accounts Page (MAP).** This module was added to VG in 2010; it enables the head of household to see information about his or her SNAP benefits (as well as cash and health assistance, if applicable). MAP is an online resource for SNAP participants that provides information on the application or case status, benefit amounts and benefit history, notices issued within the past 90 days, and the next recertification date. Users are also able to view their benefit history, see a list of verification documents that are still needed, and see information about their case manager or local office. Users cannot make changes or recertify online, nor can they upload documents requested by the state agency. Eligibility workers noted that some potential efficiency gains are diminished because only some information from the online application migrates directly into the state's eligibility system, and because they print all online applications to create a separate paper case file that is assigned to an eligibility worker.

Figure IV.4. Summary of Expanded Technology Applications, Massachusetts
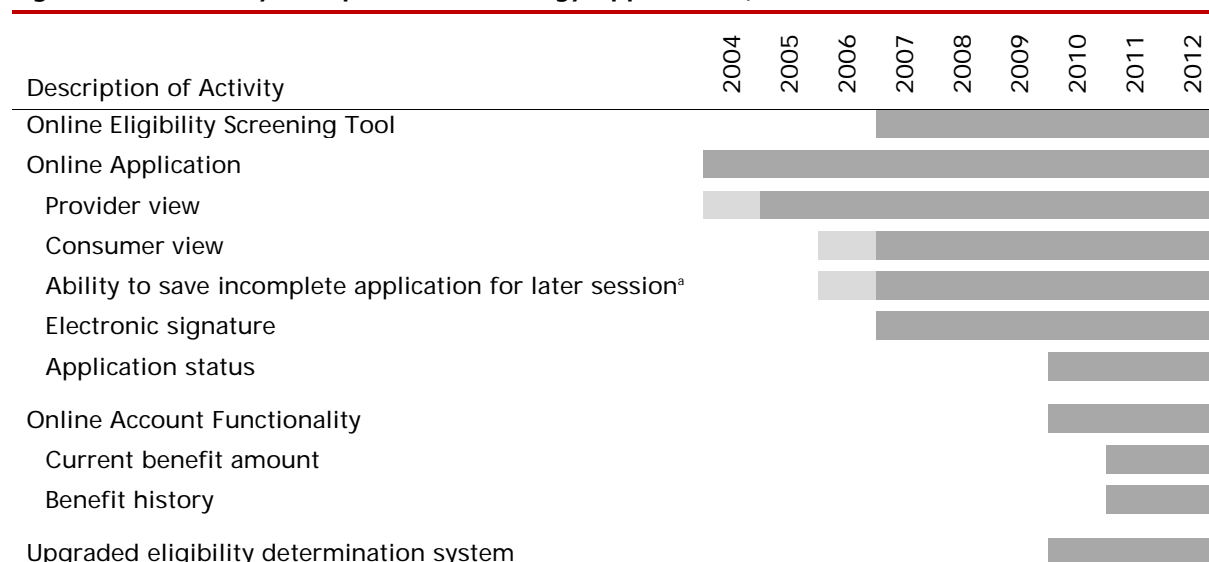
Source: Information reported to Mathematica by the Massachusetts DTA.

[a] The ability to save incomplete applications for the provider view was implemented in March 2006; for the consumer view it was piloted in March 2007 and fully implemented in November 2007.

Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.

Initiative in statewide implementation.

Importantly, although VG is an application for DTA benefits, DTA does not host and has limited control over this application. This means a (sometimes lengthy) lag between when DTA requests changes to the application and when they are implemented, sometimes with important consequences for clients. For instance, since 2010, SNAP applicants in Massachusetts have been able to self-declare child care expenses, rent, and utilities, without additional verification. But, if these clients use the (not yet updated at the time of this report) online application, that tool has not yet been updated to reflect the policy change or to provide a space for clients to self-declare these expenses. The result is that online applicants must take additional verification steps that are not required of in-person SNAP applicants.

BEACON, Massachusetts' rules-based system that determines eligibility and benefit amounts, was upgraded in an effort to increase case processing efficiency. BEACON was originally deployed in 2001, but became increasingly difficult to reprogram for the policy changes implemented by DTA. In 2010, the agency deployed BEACON III, a more user-friendly, web-based system that could more easily adapt to changes in policy. Staff at all levels agreed that BEACON III is an improvement that has eased the workflow, especially a new series of reports that assist them with managing increasing caseloads. BEACON III can attach PDF documents directly into a case file, though staff reported that this feature is not heavily used.

More critical to staff, BEACON III offers a number of reports (views) that enable eligibility workers to check the status of an application, how many days it has been pending, whether it is expedited, and other key information. The views also identify priority actions—for example, who needs to schedule an appointment, which applications are awaiting authorization, and which recertifications are due. Most of these reports are downloadable and can be manipulated in Microsoft Excel, providing further flexibility for eligibility workers, and can be sorted by key caseload characteristics (for example, by name, pending status, date of application, or expedited status).

BEACON III, though well-received, was not implemented without challenges. The new system was deployed 18 months later than planned, requiring approximately three years to develop. One local office manager explained that the delay has "made it more difficult to get traction on implementing other technology initiatives." Eligibility workers reported some initial system bugs that slowed their ability to take advantage of its improved capabilities. For example, certain BEACON III screens must be completed in a precise order to ensure that an application is processed or a certification cleared. Many eligibility workers told us that when using BEACON III, they have to assess whether an eligibility determination or benefit amount that appears incorrect could be due to a data entry error. This, in turn, requires them to have a stronger grasp of program policy.

Consistent with its primary goal for modernization, the state agency also used technology to provide additional contact points for potential clients to apply for benefits and to obtain information about their active cases. In 2005, DTA established a toll-free telephone number (866-950-FOOD) for potential applicants to access application instructions and program information. Applicants may also choose to have an application mailed to them, as well as receive information about an online application. DTA also has an interactive voice response system, accessible through a separate toll-free number (877-382-2363) that enables active clients and recent applicants to access basic information about the program, their application, and their case.

Staff at all levels of the agency frequently reported that a robust document imaging system is the next, most important technology initiative to add in Massachusetts. Their shared view is that this tool, with images accessible via BEACON III, is a foundational technology that would act as the backbone of a fully functioning electronic case record system. An earlier attempt at document imaging in Massachusetts was unsuccessful. In response to the legislative mandate "to develop a system to image and catalogue eligibility documents electronically,"[50] the North Shore local office piloted a program in August 2009. The pilot tested a document management model based in a

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[50] Massachusetts Fiscal Year 2007 General Appropriations Act. 4400-1001.
See [www.malegislature.gov/Budget/CurrentBudget].

decentralized, local office. Two key findings from that pilot were that (1) a local office-based document imaging system was "not scalable" and a centralized model was recommended as an alternative and (2) the lack of integration between BEACON and the document management interface created inefficiencies for eligibility workers. As we describe in Section C (Lessons Learned), the state has not yet acted on the recommendations from this pilot report, though the staff desire for such a tool remains strong.

Modernization in Massachusetts from the Client's Perspective

Clients in most local offices in Massachusetts no longer interact with only one designated caseworker for the duration of their case due to the state's recent restructuring of its administrative functions. Clients typically now work with two different caseworkers, depending on whether the client is applying or managing an ongoing case. The agency has also made progress in improving the client's overall experience for non–English-speaking clients, according to union leaders. Specifically, DTA has acquired caseworkers with the language skills needed to serve an increasingly diverse client population.

Application. Clients in Massachusetts access program information through online resources or with the aid of a community partner. Online resources are convenient to clients with computer literacy and those with mobility or transportation issues. For clients who do not access online resources, community partners offer assistance with completing applications. Some community partners especially cater to specific populations, such as non-English speakers or homeless clients.

Clients may apply for SNAP online or on paper. They can apply on paper in person at a local office or transmit the application via other means (dropping it off or faxing it). If the client decides to complete the paper application in person, the client talks with a caseworker, who completes the application for the client. Clients with computer skills and access to an Internet-connected computer can apply online. However, some staff believe that online applications take longer to process than paper applications (see Section B.1.C), and online applications require verification of certain expenses that need not be verified during an in-person application. A supervisor at one local office discouraged clients from applying online, particularly in cases in which the client had to receive benefits quickly.

Certification. After a client has applied, he or she may interview either in person or via telephone. If the client applied in person at a local office, or dropped off or faxed to the local office, the same intake caseworker who handled the application submission completes the interview, either in person or by telephone. For online applications that are routed to the WAU, the intake caseworker can be located at one of the state's two centralized WAUs and the interview is conducted by telephone. Clients generally submit any required verification documents in person at local offices. However, clients may also mail or fax the documents or submit them with the aid of community partners, who package the documents and submit them to the local office on the clients' behalf. At select local offices, clients may submit documents via a fax that routes the verification to the caseworkers' email.

Recertification. After eligibility determination, a new staff member—the ongoing caseworker—is assigned to the case in offices that have split intake and ongoing tasks. Massachusetts does not notify clients of the change in caseworkers, so clients often attempt to reach their intake caseworker regarding recertification, who then informs the client of the change to the newly assigned ongoing caseworker.

In Massachusetts, most clients recertify annually, though elderly and disabled clients recertify every two years. Midway through their certification period, clients complete an interim report. Only a signature is required to verify that the client has had no changes. Neither an interview nor verification are required at this midway point. At the point of recertification, clients receive a recertification form prefilled with information from the state's eligibility system. If there are no changes, the client confirms the information. If there are changes, the client reports those on the form and they are subject to verification. A recertification interview is required unless the client is elderly or disabled with no earned income.

Case maintenance. Most clients who report changes either call or visit their caseworker to do so. Clients may also access their basic account information online via MAP, though use of MAP is not widespread. Clients may not edit their account information via MAP.

A client needing case-specific information can access the call center via a toll-free telephone number. However, the call center can provide only some services: it can send some automated notifications to clients with information they request about their case, but does not allow clients to report changes.

c.　Partnering with Community Organizations

Partnerships between community organizations and other public agencies have been instrumental to the state's efforts to improve program access, according to state staff. As one senior agency official noted, the idea of the partnerships is to "go where the people are." Most community partners have an informal relationship with DTA. However, DTA has recently established formal partnerships with a select group of community partners through the Outreach Partner Reimbursement Program discussed later in this chapter.

Agency officials told us that community partners helped to overcome the negative stigma historically associated with the program by marketing SNAP as a nutrition assistance benefit (rather than a subsidy) for individuals and their families. Partners also educated individuals about their potential eligibility and served as conduits for information on any policy changes that might affect eligibility or benefit amounts. And because the first point of contact with potential clients is so important, partners provided application assistance to individuals, including submitting applications on their behalf and helped them gather the necessary verifications. These partnerships were so important that in 2004 DTA created a senior level position—assistant SNAP director for outreach—to oversee these activities.[51] Partnerships are active with community organizations and other public agencies that serve the low-income population.

DTA has actively sought to expand outreach partnerships with community organizations that target low-income or underserved populations, such as individuals with disabilities; food pantry clients; homeless individuals; and noncitizen, elderly, and Hispanic/Latino populations. To that end, DTA has been actively building its network of community organizations, churches, food pantries, noncitizen support organizations, and hospitals and health centers since 2002 (Figure IV.5). In total, DTA has 14 reimbursement partners as of federal FY 2012 that provide outreach and application assistance, through its agreement with University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS), described later in this chapter.

To prepare community organizations to serve SNAP clients, DTA provides training. Community organizations that provide application assistance receive training from DTA staff, which typically includes an overview of the SNAP application process and detailed information on how to apply (including the types of documents that case workers will require as verification). Partners that wish to submit VG applications receive additional training; to date, the state agency estimates that hundreds of community organizations have been trained on VG. DTA offers additional training to its partners to update them on important policy and procedural changes.

Massachusetts piloted a SNAP Outreach Partner Reimbursement Project in FY 2011 (receiving formal approval from FNS[52]) to further expand the role of its most active community partners and reimburse them for their outreach and application assistance. To administer the project, DTA entered into an interdepartmental service agreement with UMMS, which provides support for (and

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[51] The position was filled from 2004 through 2009, when budget cuts reduced staff within the state's SNAP unit. As of the date of this report, the position remains unfilled.

[52] DTA required authority to retain federal reimbursements rather than directing it into the state general fund. According to a senior state official, local advocates and other nonprofit groups independently lobbied the state legislature and emphasized the benefits of providing DTA with this authority. In May 2010, the Massachusetts legislature enacted legislation that allowed the state to reimburse CBOs for allowable costs incurred when performing SNAP outreach and application assistance.

Figure IV.5. Summary of Partnerships with Community Organizations and Businesses, Massachusetts

Description of Activity	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Partners Conduct Outreach and Assist with Intake		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Partners Offer Access to and/or Assistance with Application			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Partners Gain Access to Online Client Information			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Formal Contracts or MOUs (with compensation for partners)											■	■
Partners Involved in Developing or Translating Application		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Consultant Involved in Developing Call Center (Brockton)			▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨

Source: Information reported to Mathematica by Massachusetts DTA.

▨ Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.
■ Initiative in statewide implementation.

enters into specific contracts with) each outreach partner. In the planning process for the Outreach Partner Reimbursement Program, UMMS met with DTA to determine which partners to select to participate, and first tried to recruit from among the top 10 VG providers. The formal objective of the project is to "increase access to benefits for new applicants and eliminate interruption of benefits for ongoing clients while improving their overall satisfaction" (Cao 2011). The state also identified three complementary goals: (1) reimburse outreach partners for SNAP outreach activities and application assistance, (2) improve the quality of applications submitted by outreach partners, and (3) reduce DTA staff time processing outreach partner applications and recertifications (UMMS 2011). Individual outreach partners are reimbursed 47.5 percent of allowable costs for the SNAP outreach and application activities.[53] DTA expects to expand this program from 14 current partners to 22 partners in 2013.

The agreements that each partner signed with UMMS included goals for the number of applications to be submitted and an approval standard (at least a 50 percent approval rate for applications submitted). In the first year of the project, all but one participating partner met this application approval goal. The approval rates among the partners ranged from 40 to 82 percent; although one partner did not reach the goal, UMMS staff indicated that it was not likely that partner would receive punitive action for its underperformance.

In 2004, DTA also initiated partnerships with sister agencies that served low-income populations, such as the Department of Developmental Services, the Department of Mental Health, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Over time, these partnerships have expanded to include other agencies, such as the Department of Early Education and Childcare and the Department of Veterans Services. Through these partnerships, DTA provides training to the departments about SNAP, works with them to streamline the application and/or verification process, or both. These agencies submit applications (paper or VG)

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[53] UMMS is also reimbursed 50 percent of its administrative costs associated with running the project, plus 2.5 percent of the participating partners' allowable costs.

to DTA and, in some agencies, staff will then act as authorized representatives for purposes of applying for SNAP. As policy and procedural changes emerge, DTA provides updated trainings for these agencies as well.

d.   Policy Simplification

To select policies to target for changes during its modernization effort, a regional director explained, DTA analyzed its program data to identify "who we have" and compared that information with U.S. Census data to identify "who we don't have." The regional director reported that these analyses supported what staff already anecdotally knew—eligible elderly and disabled populations, as well as other groups (such as veterans and Hispanics), were being underserved. The state agency then sought to reduce the barriers to access for these underserved groups, as well as all eligible individuals, using the policy simplification and burden reduction strategies described in this section (Figure IV.6). Over time, the state has continued to assess the participation level of various groups to continually target relevant policy options to increase access for those underserved groups.

Figure IV.6. Summary of Policy Changes, Massachusetts
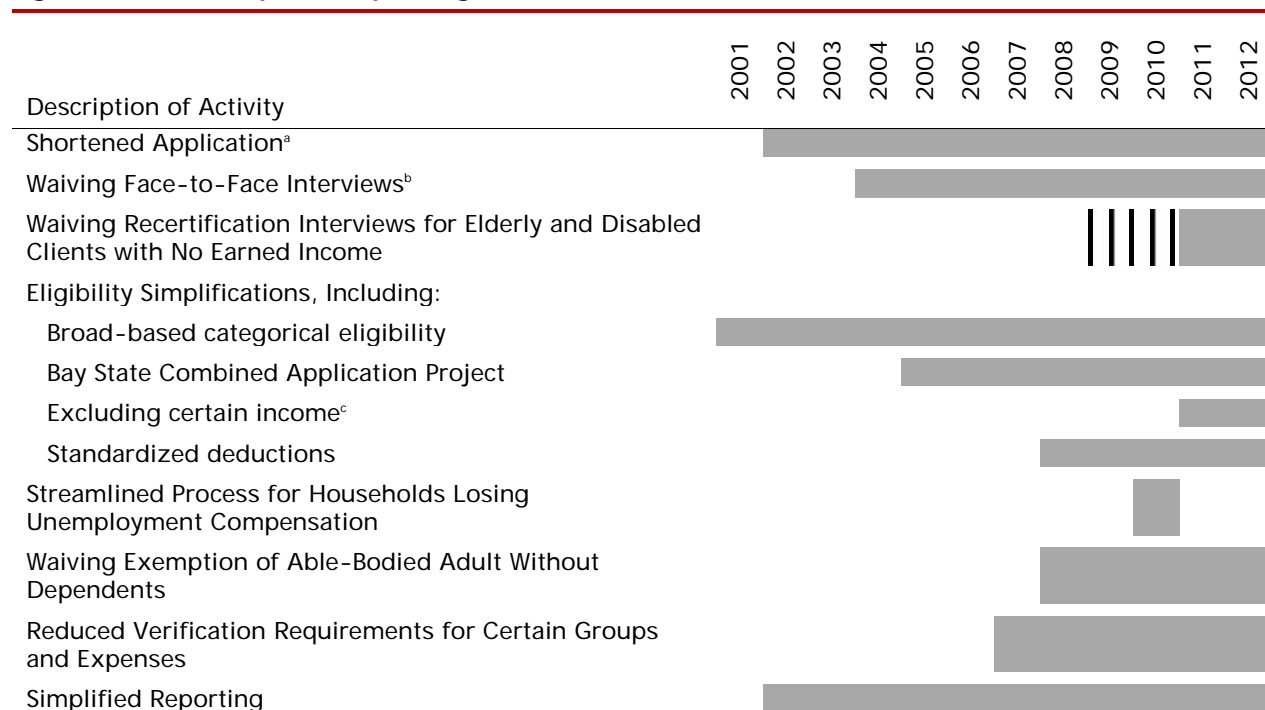
Source: Information reported to Mathematica by the Massachusetts DTA.

[a] In 2008, the application for elderly clients was further shortened.

[b] Implemented in 2004 for recertification interview, in 2009 for initial application interview.

[c] Excluded federal tax refund amounts from income for eligibility determination and benefit amounts.

Initiative in statewide implementation.
Initiative approved but not immediately implemented.

An early policy change was to the SNAP application itself. In November 2002, DTA shortened both the English and Spanish versions from 16 pages to 4. Simplified reporting in Massachusetts has also been in place since 2002. In 2008, Massachusetts implemented broad-based categorical eligibility

and eliminated the asset test (which had posed a barrier to many potentially eligible individuals), received a waiver exemption of the work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents, and instituted standardized deductions for medical expenses. DTA also began to allow self-declarations of dependent care expenses in 2007 and utility and shelter costs in 2010, and instituted waivers of face-to-face interviews (in 2004 for recertification interviews and in 2009 for initial application interviews). Finally, in 2011, Massachusetts implemented a policy to exclude tax refunds as countable income when determining eligibility and benefit amounts.

Other key policy changes attempted to ease the path to SNAP benefits for specific groups. In 2010, the state changed the eligibility requirements for college students to include those who attend a Perkins-compliant vocational-oriented program in one of the state's community colleges. DTA also received a temporary (June 2010 through end of December 2010) waiver that allowed Massachusetts to delay the interview and verification process for households confirmed by the Department of Unemployment Insurance to have exhausted their Unemployment Insurance benefits and qualified for expedited SNAP benefits.

To reduce the burden elderly and/or disabled clients face when applying for SNAP, DTA made four changes:

1. DTA implemented the Bay State Combined Application Project (CAP), which streamlines the SNAP application process for elderly and disabled SSI recipients. They receive a standardized program benefit amount without having to visit a local office or submit applications. During the initial implementation phases of the project in 2005, the state enrolled more than 55,000 SSI elderly and disabled people through this simplified enrollment process.

2. In 2008, DTA further streamlined the application for elderly individuals, reducing the standard four-page application to a two-page application for elderly clients.

3. The agency streamlined the verification process in 2008 to allow disabled noncitizen elderly clients to verify disability through a statement from their own physicians to access SNAP benefits. Previously these applicants were not eligible for SNAP because they had been in the United States for fewer than five years and were not eligible to be referred to a disability screening.

4. In 2011, DTA eliminated the recertification interview requirement for elderly and disabled households with no earned income (after obtaining a waiver from FNS to do so in 2008; this waiver was the first of its kind granted by USDA).

To ease burden at recertification, Massachusetts maximized the certification periods for all participants: two-year certification periods for families with either elderly or disabled clients, one-year certification for all other households. In addition, the state implemented the Public Assistance SNAP Recertification Project, which aligns the recertification time frames for clients who receive both SNAP and cash assistance. At the halfway point for recertifications, the agency mails a one-page (for elderly or disabled clients) or a prefilled (for all other clients) form that clients need only to sign to confirm there are no changes. At the end of the certification period, DTA sends households a prefilled form that includes information from its eligibility determination system. The household must confirm that all the information is accurate and no changes have been made, or it must report

and verify changes. Interviews are required at recertification for all households except for the elderly and disabled. Another policy temporarily implemented by the state that affected clients at recertification was the suspension of automatic closures in May 2009.[54] This policy stopped automatic case closures of overdue recertifications to prevent benefits from being issued without determining eligibility.

B. Changes in Outcomes Following Modernization

According to state officials, Massachusetts' SNAP modernization efforts primarily focused on improving access. This was unique among study states. Other study states also sought to improve efficiency, accuracy, and timeliness, and all of them had either a hiring freeze or a legislative mandate to reduce agency costs. Although Massachusetts faced growing caseloads like other states, DTA officials did not cite hiring freezes or agency budget constraints as key motivators for improving efficiency. Not unexpectedly, outcomes in the program access area were the most prominent positive changes over the study period, which suggests the state was successful at achieving its primary goal for modernization. Compared with other case study states, Massachusetts does not appear as successful at improving key outcomes aside from program access. This is consistent with the state's more narrowly focused set of initiatives and its less comprehensive, less cohesive approach to modernization. However, it should be cautioned that the analysis in this report cannot conclude whether changes in program outcomes are due to modernization or other factors. It is possible that the impact of modernization in Massachusetts is the same as in other states, but countervailing forces limited changes in key outcomes.

Massachusetts caseloads climbed significantly from 2003 to 2012, the period during which most modernization reforms took effect, but also concurrent with a national and state economic downturn. Despite the availability of an online application and partner assistance, most clients applied in person—working with an eligibility worker at a local office—because they could get their benefits faster.

As the number of applications rose, application processing time increased and the percentage of applications processed within federal timeliness guidelines declined. These trends might suggest that the state's existing policy changes and partnerships have improved program access, yet a more coherent focus on technology and restructuring initiatives is needed to improve program efficiency going forward. The state was able to lower administrative costs per case, even as it increased the number of eligibility workers. Although error rates also declined, the sharpest decline occurred before the state's modernization efforts started.

This section discusses trends in key outcomes. Appendix D contains supplementary tables with even greater detail.

1. Client Access and Satisfaction

a. SNAP Participation and Growth Rates

From 2003 to early 2012, the average monthly number of people participating in SNAP almost tripled, rising from approximately 281,400 recipients in January 2003 to approximately 770,100 in

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[54] After FNS intervention, automatic closures were reinstated in March 2011.

February 2012 (Figure IV.7). Although worsening economic conditions were likely a significant factor contributing to increases in SNAP participation, the average number of individual SNAP participants increased even during periods when the poverty and unemployment rates were not increasing. This suggests that increases in participation were a result (at least in part) of DTA's efforts to reduce barriers for eligible individuals in addition to the broader economic changes.

Figure IV.7. Trends in Monthly Average Number of SNAP Recipients and Economic Indicators, 2003-2011, Massachusetts

Source: Participation is based on Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA. Unemployment rates are from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Poverty rates from 2004 to 2010 are from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Briefs. Poverty rates from 2000 to 2003 are from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey.

Note: The poverty rate in 2000 through 2003 represents a two-year average. For instance, the poverty rate shown in 2003 represents the average poverty rate from 2002 through 2003.

Indeed, some of the growth in the caseload can be attributed to higher rates of participation among eligible individuals (as opposed to increases in the number of eligible individuals). The state's PAI increased consistently from 2005 to 2010 (Figure IV.8). The state climbed from the lowest PAI in the nation in 2002 to the 10th highest in 2010. Increasing program access has been the primary goal for modernization in Massachusetts, and the improvements in program access could in part reflect the state's modernization initiatives. State staff attributed their achievements in program access to their efforts to simplify policy and to expand use of partnerships with community organizations.

Figure IV.8. Trends in SNAP Program Access Index, 2005- 2010, Massachusetts
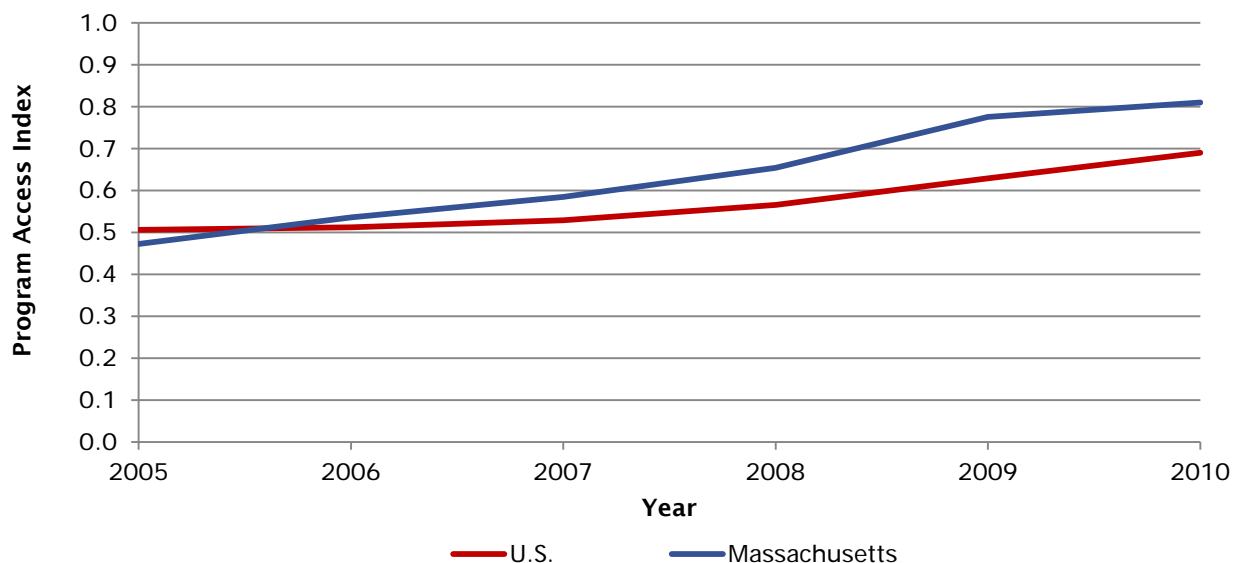
Note: PAI measures access by taking the average monthly number of SNAP participants over the course of a calendar year compared with the number of people in each state with incomes below 125 percent of the federal poverty level. A higher PAI indicates greater program access.

As the caseload grew, the elderly proportion of the caseload increased. In 2007, elderly individuals accounted for 12.7 percent of the caseload; this increased to 13.9 percent in 2011. This might reflect targeted efforts to increase participation among the eligible elderly. In most cases, the recession increased participation among working-age adults, rather than elderly individuals, so this increase in the share of the elderly caseload in Massachusetts suggests that efforts to expand access and participation among this group have met with success.

The average monthly number of disabled participants increased from 2007 to 2009 (from 127,682 to 154,274—a 20.8 percent increase); the overall average monthly number of SNAP clients grew by 46.5 percent (from 421,821 to 617,870) during those years. This led the disabled proportion of the caseload to fall from 30.9 percent in 2007 to 25.2 percent in 2009 (Figure IV.9). Although it is plausible that modernization efforts limited access during this period, it is possible that the economic situation introduced large numbers of new, nondisabled, participants, which would suppress the overall percentage of disabled participants. Indeed, during this same 2007 to 2009 period, during the economic decline, the national share of nonelderly SNAP clients increased by 1.2 percentage points, and the national share of nondisabled adults SNAP clients increased by 2.6 percentage points (Eslami, Filion, and Strayer 2011).

Figure IV.9: Changes in Characteristics of SNAP Recipients in Massachusetts, 2007- 2011
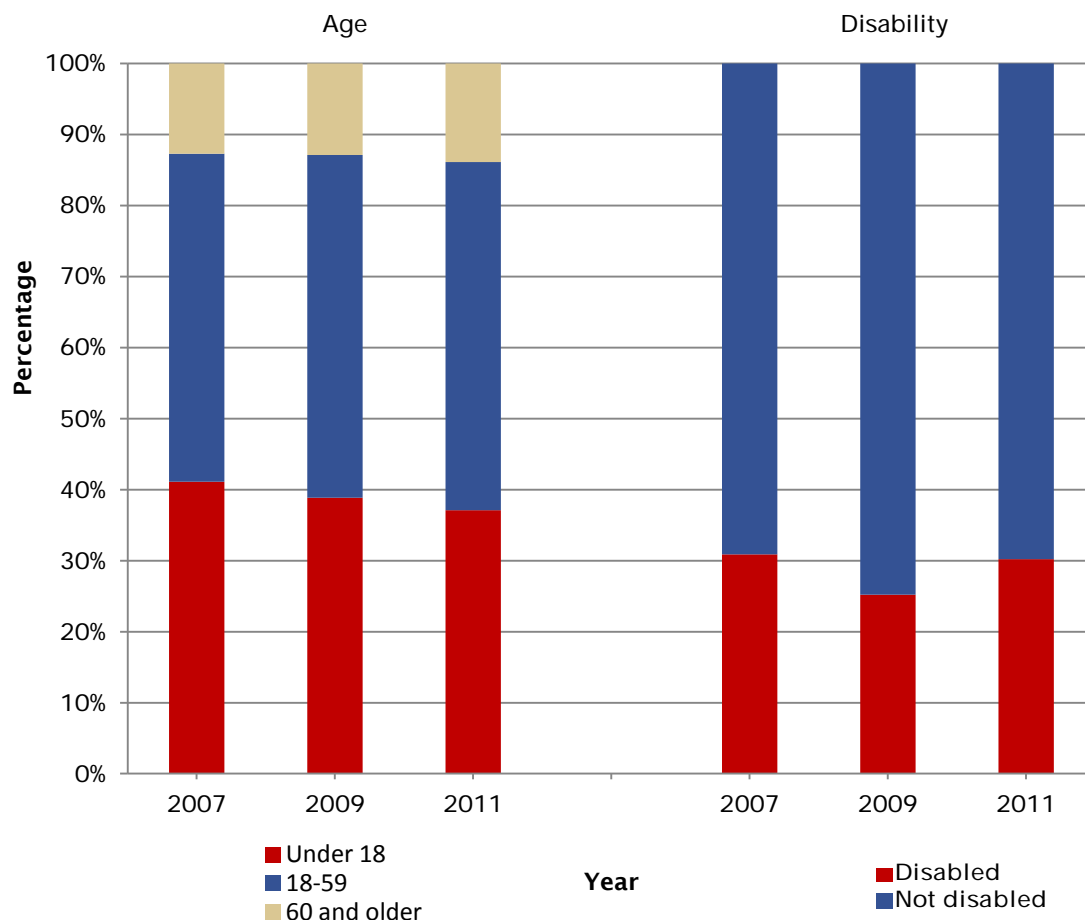
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

Although Massachusetts' modernization efforts sought to increase participation among eligible Hispanic individuals through the targeted efforts of partners and the hiring of more Spanish-speaking DTA staff, data limitations preclude us from examining whether these efforts succeeded. In Massachusetts' case records, a large proportion of individuals are missing race/ethnicity data, and this proportion changed dramatically over time (Table IV.2). Thus, although the proportion of the caseload that is Hispanic remained relatively constant from 2008 to 2011, it is possible that additional Hispanic individuals are participating within the missing race/ethnicity data, and this population might change over time.

Table IV.2. Percentage of Missing Racial/Ethnicity Recipient Data and Hispanic Recipient Data, 2007-2011, Massachusetts

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Hispanic SNAP Recipients	21.9	28.4	27.1	26.2	26.1
Percentage of Recipients with Missing Race/Ethnicity Data	30.9	10.7	13.7	16.4	18.2

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

b.   Application Submissions

The number of applications processed per month increased more than 76 percent from September 2003 to December 2011 (from 12,595 to 22,139) (Figure IV.10). In 2005, the number of applications surged in two separate months, June and October. These surges reflect the influx of SSI recipients onto the SNAP rolls during the first phase of the Bay State Combined Application Project, which are counted as applications in these caseload data. The caseload also climbed sharply in 2008 (apparently coinciding with the rise in unemployment and poverty illustrated in Figure IV.7). State staff also believe that the implementation of a broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) policy during this year, which removed the asset test from the SNAP certification process, might also have contributed to the application increase.

Figure IV.10. Applications Processed per Month, 2003- 2011, Massachusetts
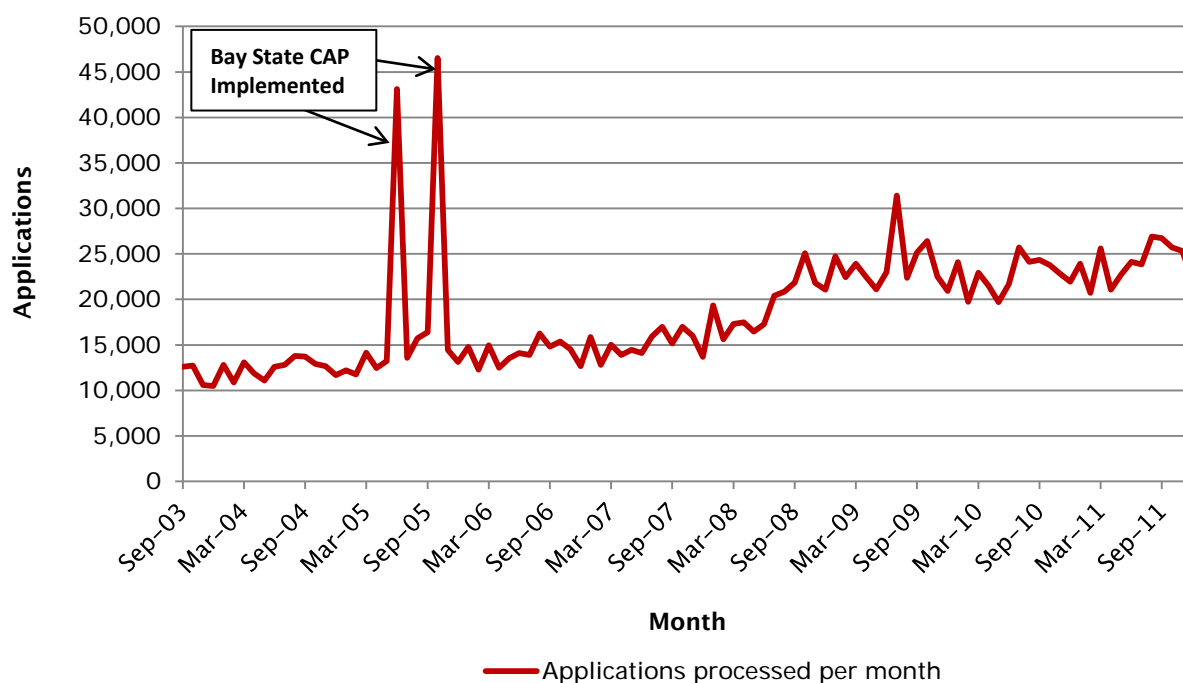
Although application rates increased, application approval rates declined gradually from 2003 to 2012 (Figure IV.11). This decline might be explained by lower approval rates for online applications. Because online applications are intended to help reduce application barriers, they might attract more applicants (some of whom could be ineligible). In addition, eligibility workers who process online applications noted that in some cases applicants do not fully understand the application process despite the availability of detailed instructions on VG and, therefore, do not realize that the application process does not end after they hit the submit button. Specifically, many clients do not provide verifications in a timely fashion and/or make themselves available for interviews, and some of the denials of online applications might be due to this process not being completed before the 30-day deadline. (When interviews do occur for online applications, they often take longer to complete because, staff report, online applications tend to be less complete and require more follow-up to process.)

Figure IV.11. Approval Rate of SNAP Applications by Month, 2003- 2011, Massachusetts

—— Approval rate of SNAP applications
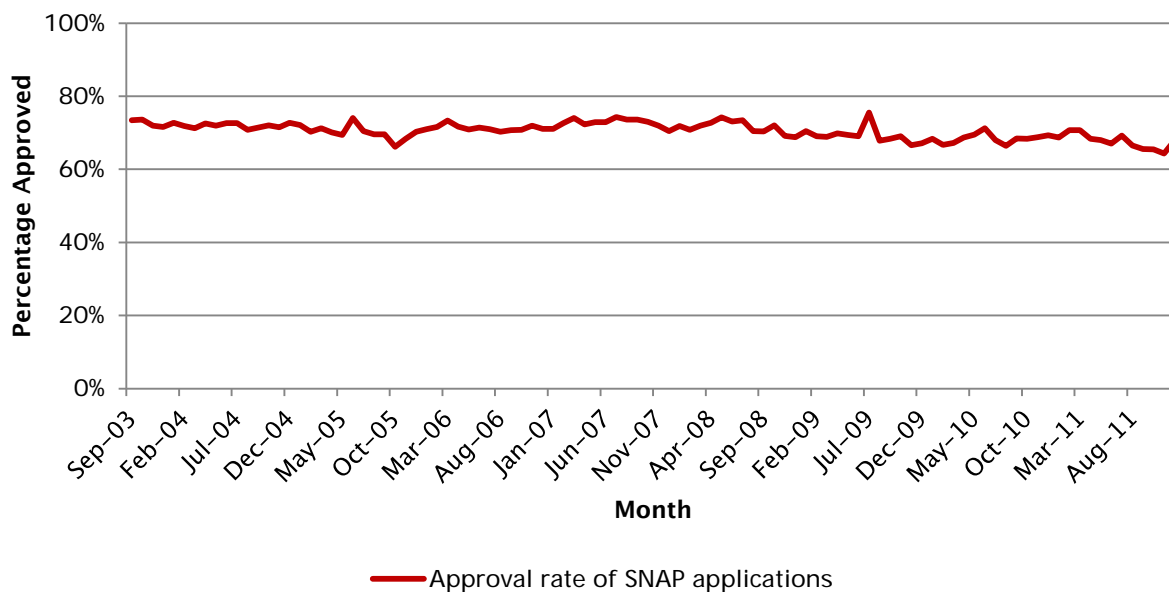
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

In recent years, average application processing time in Massachusetts has increased and the percentage of applications completed within timeliness standards[55] has declined (Figure IV.12). The average time to process applications increased from 16.8 days in September 2003 to 17.6 days at the end of 2011. Around 2008, concurrent with an increase in applications, processing time increased sharply, suggesting that staff were unable to keep up with the increased workload (indeed, as described later, staff complained about an excess burden).

The percentage of applications processed within the timeliness standard fell from 81.0 percent in September 2003 to 67.1 percent in December 2011. Timeliness rates were substantially lower for online applications than for walk-in applications (Table IV.3). Eligibility workers identified several reasons online applications tend to take longer to process than paper. First, online applications are more likely to be to be incomplete, or to have basic information (name, address, and Social Security numbers [SSNs]) entered incorrectly. This requires workers to take extra steps reconciling bad information. Second, it is more difficult to reach an online applicant to complete an interview. Finally, unlike paper applicants, online applicants must submit verification for child care expenses, rent, and utilities. (As described earlier, this is due to a lag outside DTA's control in updating the online application to match the paper application process. In-person applicants have not needed to verify these expenses since 2010; at the time of this report, the online application still had not been updated to allow self-declaration of these expenses.) The process of obtaining this information can be time-consuming.

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[55] Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and 30 days for all other applications.

Figure IV.12. Average SNAP Application Processing Time and Timeliness, 2003- 2011, Massachusetts
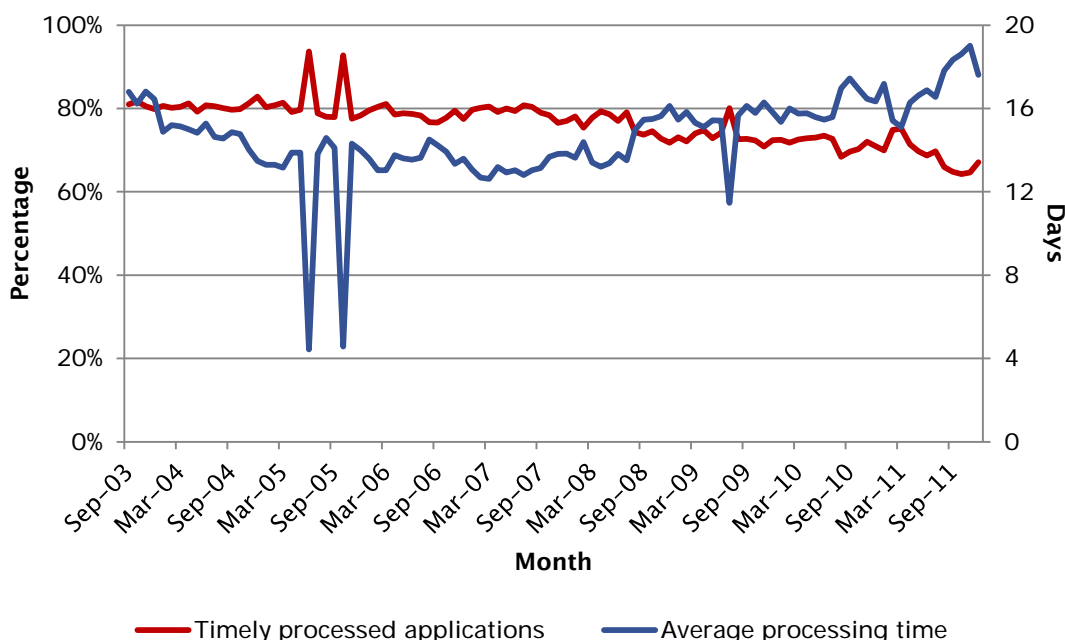
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

Notes: Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files. The results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application data provided do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications are included in our calculation of timeliness. Applications are considered timely if eligibility determinations are made within 7 days for expedited applications and 30 days for all other applications.

              Bay State CAP, which streamlined the SNAP application process, enrolled more than 55,000 elderly and disabled people during its initial phases of implementation, rolled out in June and October 2005.

Table IV.3. Percentage of Walk- in and Online Applications Processed Timely, 2005- 2011, Massachusetts

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Walk In	83.6	84.2	83.9	83.5	83.2	83.6
MA Virtual Gateway						
Client view	53.8	49.9	49.2	48.5	47.2	37.6
Provider view	50.2	59.0	59.8	59.3	56.1	48.8
Unknown	45.5	44.6	44.1	44.1	40.7	28.5

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

Note: Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files. The results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application data provided do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications are included in our calculation of timeliness.

The rate of churning in Massachusetts is volatile. From 2003 to 2011, the proportion of new enrollees who had received benefits two months prior tended to range from 20 to 30 percent (Figure IV.13). The volatility in these trends makes it difficult to identify any clear pattern. However, after 2008, rates of churning lowered (suggesting that the influx of applications observed in that year were from new applicants to the program), but appear to be rising again.

Figure IV.13. Trends in SNAP Reenrollment, 2003- 2011, Massachusetts
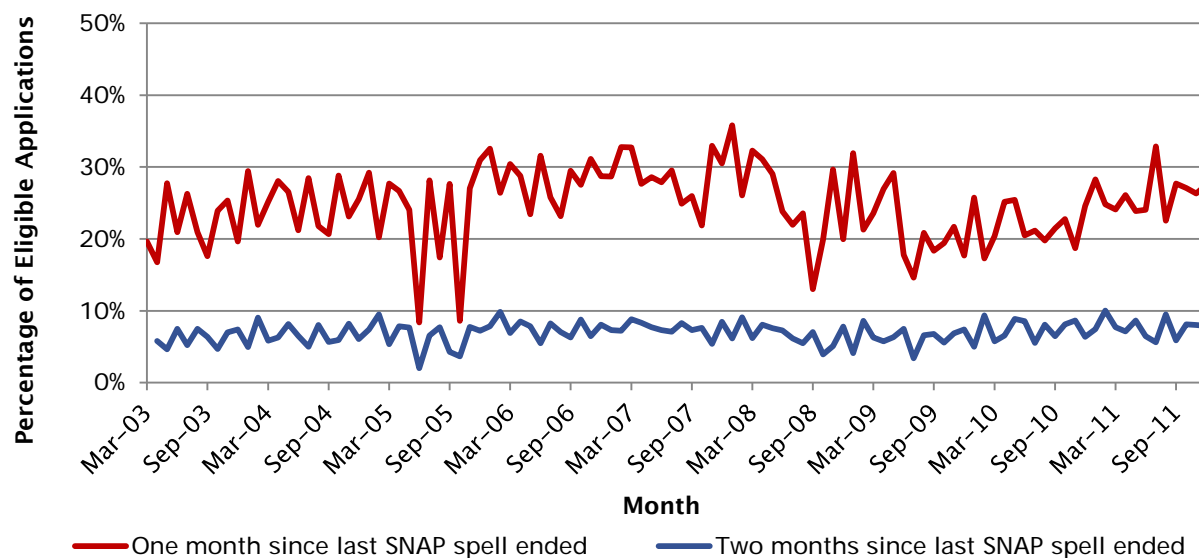
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

Note: Bay State CAP, which automatically enrolled more than 55,000 elderly and disabled people in SNAP during its initial phases of implementation, rolled out in June and October 2005.

Percentages are based on the number of households that enrolled in the given month. For instance, in January 2006, 32.6 percent of those who enrolled during that month had been on SNAP in November 2005. Households that went off SNAP and enrolled again are counted again as new enrollments.

c.   Clients' Use of New Points of Contact

Although traditional modes of application have remained steady or have grown during the period covered by this study, few clients in Massachusetts use the online system. Since 2004, walk-in and drop-off applications consistently account for more than half of all applications (Figure IV.14). Online applications, on the other hand, have never accounted for more than 21 percent of all applications. Interestingly, the percentage of applications that are mailed or faxed in has increased from 9.7 percent in 2003 to 17.7 percent in 2011. Eligibility workers and clients agreed that clients avoid the online application because of the longer application approval times associated with applying online. Clients in the focus groups cited time as the biggest motivator in choosing to apply via walk-in application rather than online. Some reported they had experienced slow processing time for online applications personally; others said they had heard about this problem from friends, family, or DTA eligibility workers.

Figure IV.14. Method of Application, 2003- 2011, Massachusetts
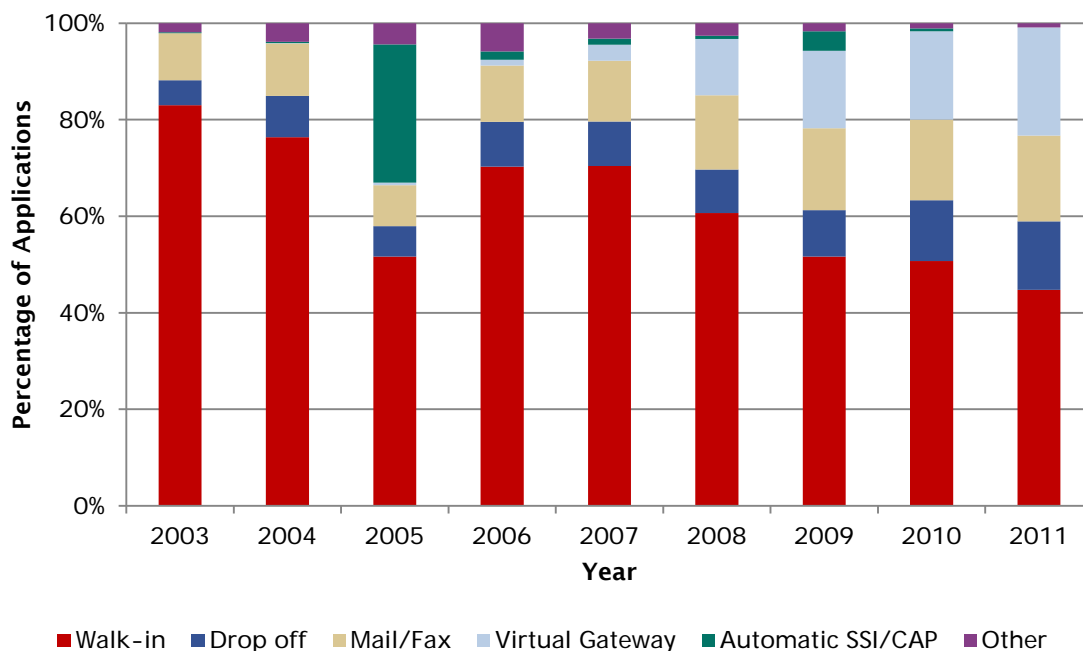
DTA has been developing a network of community partners for outreach and application assistance since 2002. Data provided by DTA show that from June 2010 through April 2011, 179 community partners submitted more than 12,000 applications via the Virtual Gateway Provider View.[56] Partner-assisted applications made up 4.3 percent of overall applications during this period.

The community organizations participating in the Outreach Partner Reimbursement Program represent a relatively new path to offer SNAP access to potential clients. In the first year of the program, the participating partners have performed above expectations. With only one exception, the community organization participants for federal FY 2011 exceeded their application and approval rate goals. This strong performance might reflect the highly selective nature of this program. The budget for this program has increased, reflecting this success. In FY 2011, the first year of the program, the final reimbursement amount for all partners for the reimbursement project was slightly more than $175,000 (Table IV.4).[57] In FY 2012, the total budget for the 14 reimbursement partners was $1,077,744 million, of which about $538,872 would be reimbursed by the federal government.

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[56] The number of applications submitted by community partners ranged from one to 1,705. Three partners submitted more than 1,200 applications each, and 82 submitted fewer than 10 applications.

[57] Because Massachusetts did not receive final approval for the reimbursement project until after FY 2011 had started, the partners did not fully ramp up their efforts. This reduced the overall budgets and final federal reimbursement amounts requested by partners.

Table IV.4. SNAP Outreach Partner Reimbursement Program, Massachusetts, FY 2011 Goals and Performance

	Application Goal	Total Applications Submitted	Total Applications Approved	Approval Rate	Federal Reimbursement Amount
Citizens for Citizens, Inc.	325	898	736	82%	$24,370
Community Action	127	257	157	61%	$9,522
Food Bank of Western Massachusetts	500	359	190	53%	$45,963
Montachusett Opportunity Council	87	214	107	50%	$6,512
Project Bread	804	814	431	53%	$59,374
UMASS Memorial Health Care	393	1064	426	40%	$29,467
Total	2,236	3,606	2,047	57%	$175,208

Source: Data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

Note: The number of applications approved is derived. UMASS provided the number of applications submitted and approval rate.

   Clients, staff from DTA, and community organizations had mixed opinions on the use of community partners to apply for SNAP. Community partners thought that, if not for the community partners, some clients would not apply for SNAP due to mistrust of the agency; DTA staff echoed this belief. However, some clients in the focus groups did not share this opinion and thought that going through a community partner represented an additional step and inconvenience. These clients preferred to go directly to a local office.

d.   Client Satisfaction

   The implementation of a few modernization initiatives in Massachusetts translates to limited knowledge about modernization among clients. From interviews and focus groups held with staff and clients, clients indicated low awareness of the state's modernization initiatives. They were often reluctant to make use of the initiatives with which they were familiar, particularly the online application. The online application was the only initiative that most clients in the focus groups were aware of, but most were unwilling to use it because online applications take longer to process than paper applications.

   As a result, client feedback in Massachusetts focused on experiences in the local offices. Clients expressed mixed opinions regarding their experiences at their local office, expressing approval of their one-on-one interaction with their eligibility workers and dissatisfaction with the overall local office experience. Clients, particularly from the focus group conducted in Spanish, gave their own eligibility workers very high scores when asked to rate them. However, when discussing their overall experience at the local office, they had complaints, mostly about the lobby. Concerns included that lobbies were too crowded; they had to wait too long; and front-desk workers were, according to a small number of clients, rude. However, despite their dissatisfaction with the local office, clients did sympathize that DTA staff were likely trying their best while facing significant challenges.

Clients and eligible nonparticipants diverged in their preferences of how they would interact with eligibility workers at the local office. Most clients preferred the traditional in-person case management approach. They liked being able to have one point of contact in the local office who was responsible for and familiar with their case. On the other hand, eligible nonparticipants were more receptive to a process that would not require them to go to a local office.

When asked why they had not applied or enrolled in SNAP, eligible nonparticipants voiced three main concerns. First, they believed that even if deemed eligible, the benefit amount would be too small given the amount of effort required to apply. Second, they did not like the SNAP applications, finding them to be too complex and many of the questions difficult to answer. Last, clients said that the number and type of verification documents required is too burdensome.

2.   Payment Error Rates

From 2002 to 2006, error rates fell in Massachusetts (Figure IV.15).[58] Most of this fall occurred in 2002 and 2003. After 2003, error rates remained relatively stable. As a result, there is no evidence that modernization efforts, which were primarily active beginning in 2004, had an effect on error rates one way or the other.

Figure IV.15 Trends in SNAP QC Payment Error Rate, 2000- 2010, Massachusetts
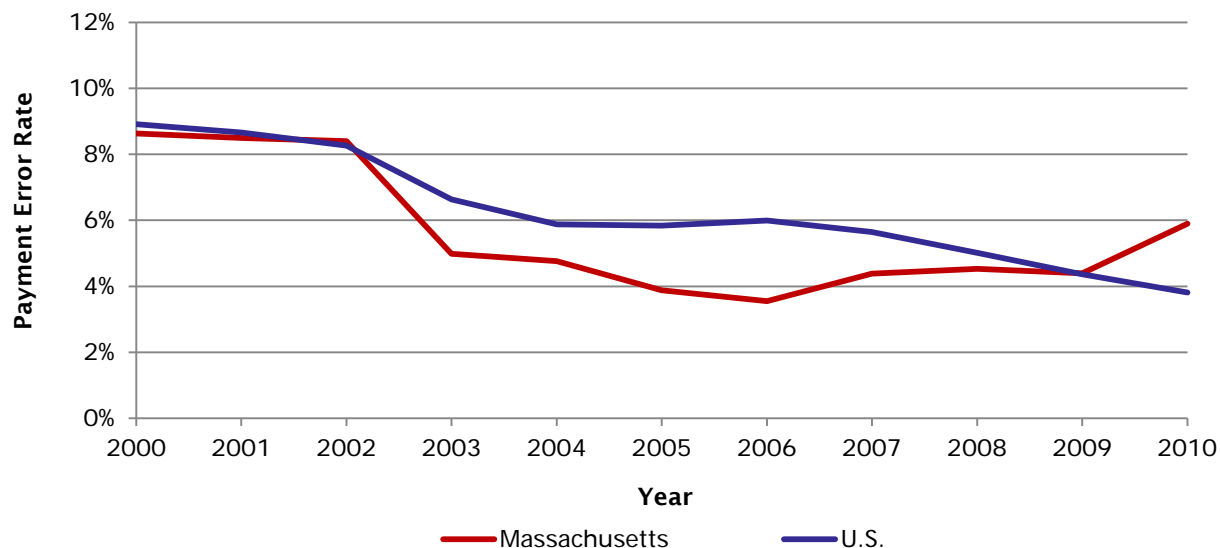
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

In terms of the negative error rate, Massachusetts generally mirrored the same ebbs and flows shown in national trends (Figure IV.16). However, Massachusetts did maintain lower negative error rates than the national average from 2000 to 2010. Because of the similarity to national trends in the negative error rate, it is not possible to conclude whether modernization or other changes had major effects on negative error rates.

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[58] Inaccurate payment amounts must be off by a certain threshold to be considered an error, unless a client is found to be ineligible. The threshold was $50 in FY 2011 and varied in past years.

Figure IV.16 Trends in SNAP QC Negative Error Rate, 2000- 2010, Massachusetts
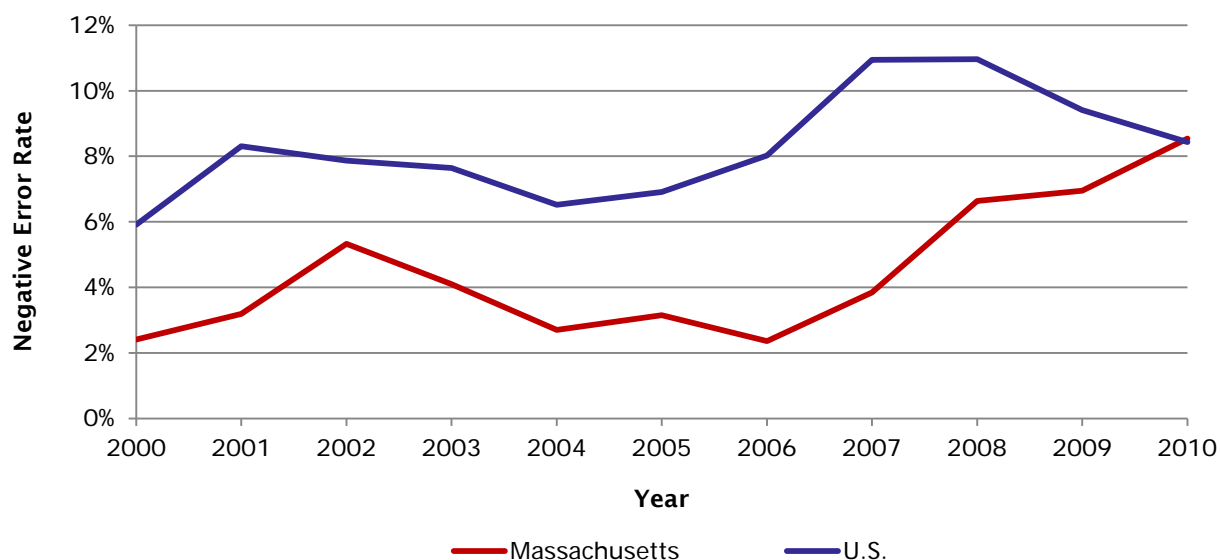
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

The 2010 jump in payment error rates and negative error rates in Massachusetts might be partially attributable to the suspension of auto-closures for recertifications implemented in May 2009.[59] DTA's suspension of auto-closures was prompted by a large backlog of recertifications during this period and the department's inability to process them in a timely fashion. During the suspension of auto-closures, cases that should have been closed due to an incomplete recertification would have remained open under this policy and would have constituted an overpayment if they were captured in the QC sample. The annual overpayment rate supports this possibility and shows a large jump in overpayments from 3.5 in 2009 to 4.9 in 2010, a 40.0 percent increase. The increase in the annual negative error rate from 2009 to 2010 also supports this, with a 22.9 percent increase in those years.

3. Administrative Costs

Massachusetts' share of total administrative costs (a part of the overall costs, which are co-funded by FNS) decreased from 2002 to 2005, but then administrative costs increased. By 2011, costs were 11.0 percent higher than in 2000 (Figure IV.17). This reflects an increase from $42.5 million in 2000 to $47.2 million 2011 in inflation-adjusted (2005) dollars. The decrease in costs from 2002 to 2005 occurred during a period when the state introduced several key policy changes, including simplified reporting and a waiver of face-to-face interviews at recertification, and during which staff levels at DTA declined. Although it is unclear whether these changes created the cost savings, similar cost savings were not experienced in other states in the Northeast region. After 2005, the state increased the number of eligibility workers, which contributed to increased administrative costs.

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[59] The auto-closure process was reinstated in Massachusetts in March 2011 as a result of FNS intervention.

Figure IV.17. Percentage Change in Total SNAP Administrative Costs from 2000 Baseline, 2000-2011, Massachusetts (2005 Dollars)
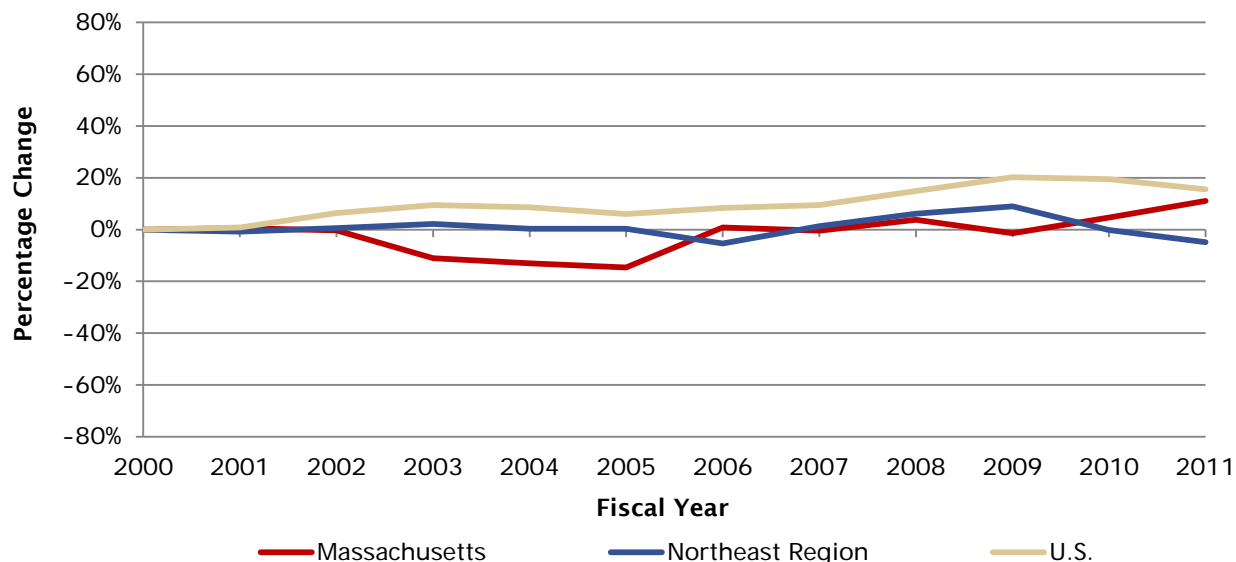
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

Although total administrative costs in Massachusetts have increased, the average monthly cost per case decreased from 2000 to 2010. The average monthly cost per case fell to 71.7 percent below baseline levels in 2000 (Figure IV.18). Nationally, average costs per case fell as the number of cases increased. In Massachusetts, the decline in average costs per case well exceeded the averages observed in the region or the nation, suggesting DTA was able to generate efficiency gains (even after increasing the number of eligibility workers in the state).

Figure IV.18. Percentage Change in Average Monthly Costs per Case from 2000 Baseline, 2000-2011, Massachusetts (2005 Dollars)
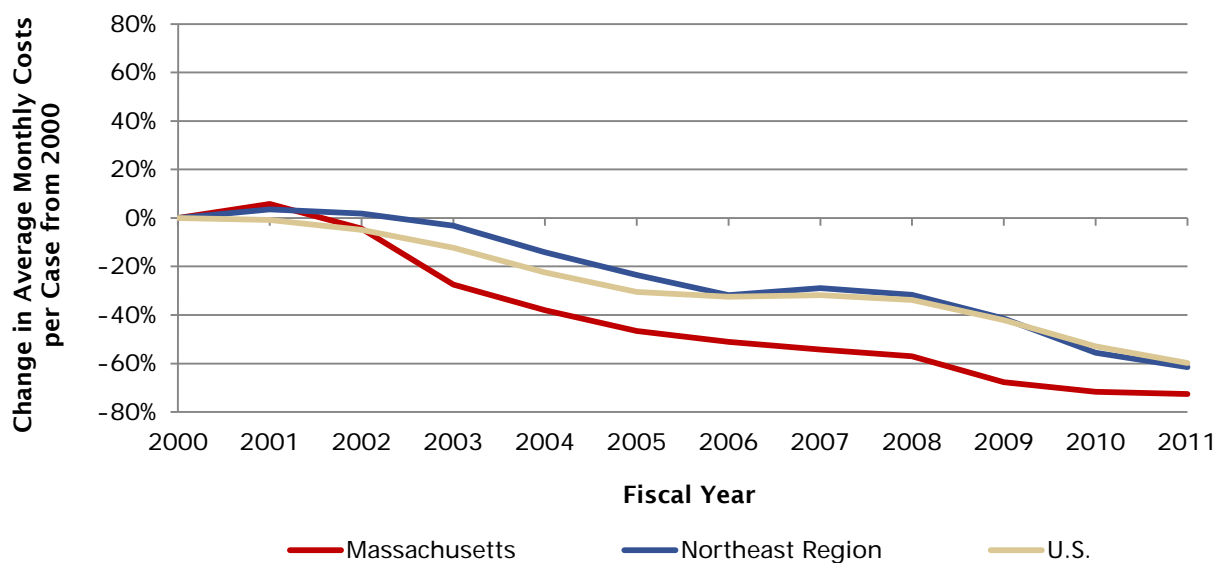
Source: Mathematica tabulations of average monthly costs and average monthly caseloads from the USDA FNS.

Certification costs comprise the largest share of DTA's reported administrative costs (Table IV.5). The proportion of certification costs remained relatively consistent over the period, ranging from 73 to 82 percent and were at their highest from 2002 to 2005. No other cost category exceeds 7 percent of total costs at any time from 2000 to 2011.

Table IV.5. Allocation of Reported State Share of SNAP Administrative Costs for Massachusetts, FY 2000- 2011 (Percent)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Certification	73.8	75.4	79.2	80.9	82.0	79.3	77.6	74.5	72.6	73.5	72.6	73.6
Issuance	4.9	4.5	4.4	4.7	5.0	4.3	4.7	4.3	4.1	5.2	5.5	5.2
Quality Control	5.5	6.6	5.9	4.5	2.7	3.7	4.7	4.3	4.3	3.6	4.0	3.3
Fraud	5.0	4.3	2.2	1.8	1.7	2.1	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.5	2.6
ADP Operations	1.4	1.3	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7	1.5	3.9
ADP Development	3.6	1.8	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	3.5	3.7	3.1	3.2	0.2
Employment & Training	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	3.0	3.6	3.8	4.2	4.1	3.4	2.7
Outreach	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.5
Miscellaneous	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.1
SNAP Education	3.3	3.7	4.5	5.9	5.7	5.4	3.5	4.4	4.6	5.0	5.0	0.0
Unspecified Other	0.3	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.7	0.6	2.2	1.0	1.0	6.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Note: According to a senior state official, a majority of outreach costs are not being allocated to the Outreach cost category, and the state is unable to confirm the exact amount.

Because certification costs account for the bulk of the state's administrative costs, it is not surprising that the trend in certification costs mirrors that of total administrative costs (Figure IV.19). The state trend tracked the regional trend until 2006, when state costs increased. However, drawing conclusions about the trends in Massachusetts' certification costs is problematic. According to a senior state official, is it likely that a majority of DTA's outreach costs have been misallocated to the certification category. The agency is unable to determine the exact amount of outreach that has been misallocated. DTA provided data for the specific costs of the Outreach Partner Reimbursement Program for federal FY 2011 for this study, but it is not clear where those costs were allocated. Some additional outreach costs, such as media campaigns and special events, might have been misallocated to the Certification cost category, although the exact amount is unknown.

Issuance costs generally fell from 2000 to 2005, with the exception of a slight increase from 2003 to 2004. Generally issuance costs remained low, first rising above the baseline in 2009 (Figure IV.20). Caseloads more than doubled from 2006 to 2011, and increasing issuance costs generally mirrored this trend. Despite a slight drop in 2007, issuance costs overall have risen since 2005, reaching their highest point in 2011 with costs of $2.4 million. The rising issuance costs reflect the growing caseload.

Figure IV.19. Percentage Change in SNAP Certification Costs from 2000 Baseline, 2000- 2011, Massachusetts (2005 Dollars)
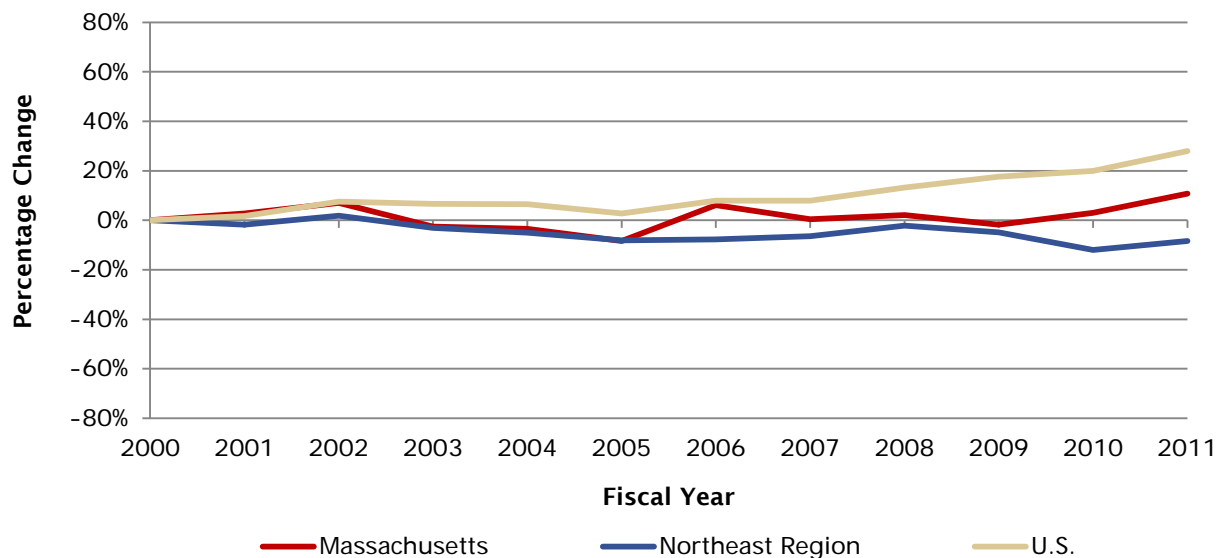
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Notes: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

               Certification costs include the costs associated with processing applications and determining eligibility at certification and recertification periods.

Figure IV.20. Percentage Change in SNAP Issuance Costs from 2000 Baseline, 2000- 2011, Massachusetts (2005 Dollars)
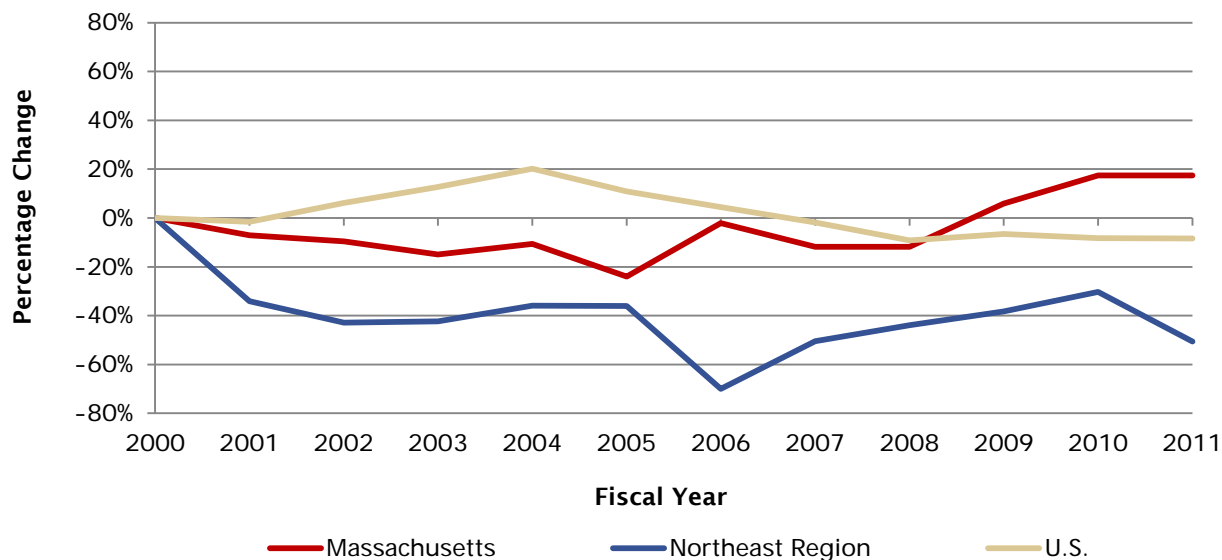
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Notes: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

               Issuance costs include the costs associated with disbursing benefits to recipients.

4.   SNAP Staff

For most of the study period, Massachusetts relied almost exclusively on the traditional caseload model, assigning each case the same specific worker to perform all case actions. The effectiveness of this model depends on staffing levels and overall caseloads being in equilibrium to some extent. Several local office managers reported that the ideal target caseload for eligibility workers in Massachusetts is somewhere between 350 and 450 cases per worker. As discussed in the next subsection, despite recent upward trends in the number of SNAP eligibility workers, caseloads have grown rapidly and now far exceed this target. This imbalance has become the key source of job dissatisfaction cited by eligibility workers.

a.   Staffing Levels[60]

Staffing levels in Massachusetts increased over the study period (Figure IV.21). The number of eligibility workers climbed from 285 in 2007 to 377 in 2011 (although the number dropped briefly in 2010). Before 2007, the number of staff had been declining. Additional information provided by DTA indicates that from FY 2002 through FY 2006 the entire agency experienced a decrease of more than 30 percent in overall staff. The number of supervisors also grew, from 163 in 2007 to 202 in 2011. Most of the growth in supervisors happened in 2010. (The pace of staff change varied somewhat by region, but not in any way directly linked to modernization efforts. Details on staff change by region are presented in Appendix D.)

Figure IV.21. Number of SNAP Staff by Level , 2007- 2011, Massachusetts
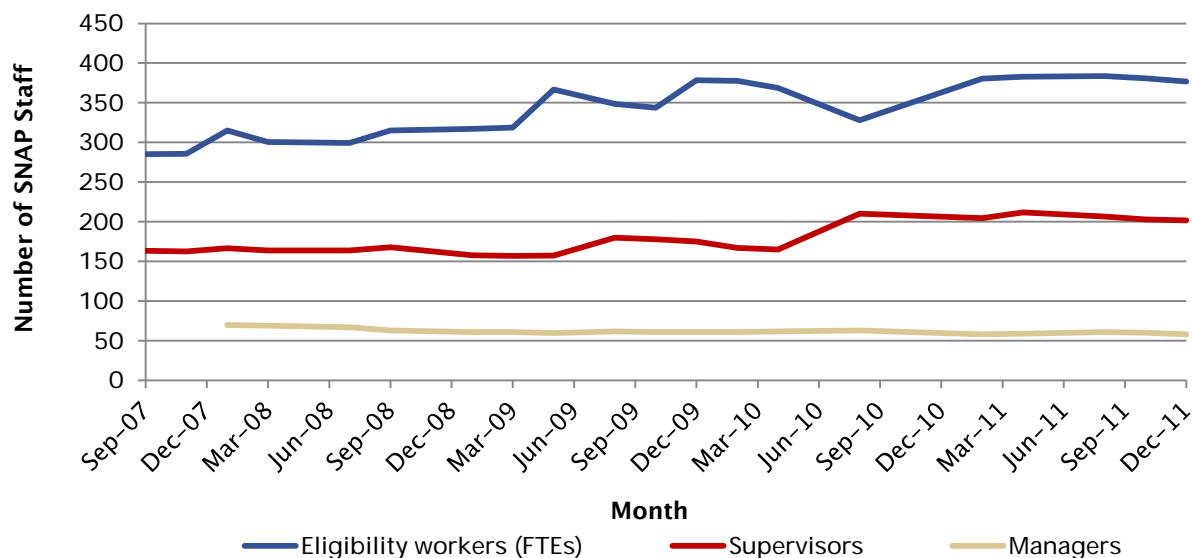
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

Note: Data for local office managers staffing levels were unavailable before January 2008.

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[60] The staffing levels presented in this section are for SNAP-only eligibility workers. Local offices also have workers who process cash assistance claims, which typically include a SNAP claim. However, conversations in Massachusetts focused on the impact on the SNAP-only claims process.

Although frontline worker and supervisor levels grew, caseloads grew more (Figure IV.22). The number of cases per worker doubled from 2007 (455 cases per worker) to 2011 (881 cases per worker).

Figure IV.22. Eligibility Staffing Levels and Cases per Eligibility Worker, 2007- 2011, Massachusetts
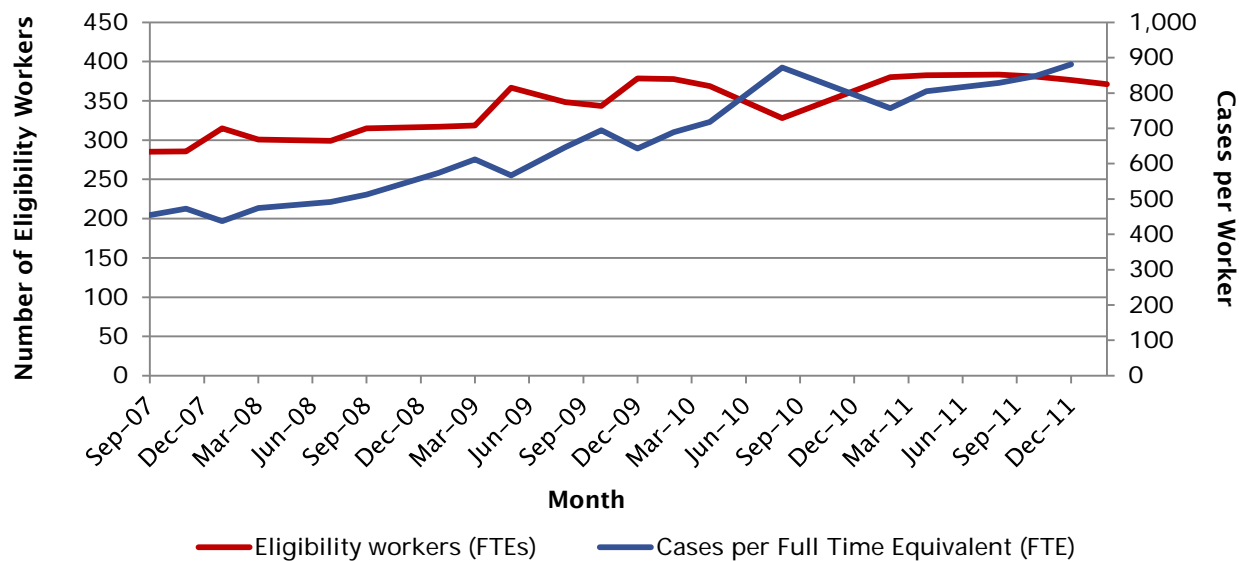
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provide by the Massachusetts DTA.

b. Staff Satisfaction

Eligibility workers generally supported many of the modernization efforts implemented by DTA. In particular, staff expressed their appreciation for policy changes and simplifications, which they report have streamlined their work and removed barriers for clients. Local office staff were also generally satisfied with BEACON III because it has improved their ability to process their cases more efficiently. In addition, eligibility workers believed that the partnerships with community organizations and the availability of online applications have increased access to the program. Staff told us that these initiatives helped clients, but did not necessarily reduce their workloads.

More frequently, however, local office staff expressed dissatisfaction with their jobs. Eligibility workers, supervisors, and managers were nearly unanimous in citing the rapidly rising caseloads as a primary reason for job dissatisfaction. Union leadership and community partners also agreed that understaffing was a challenge for the agency. The concern was so prevalent that staff in six of the seven local offices we visited raised the issue. Notably, the only office that did not raise the issue was one of the two original adopters of restructuring of eligibility functions.

The fact that DTA has added eligibility workers and supervisors in recent, high caseload volume years was never mentioned by eligibility workers or supervisors. Instead, these staff expressed widespread frustration at how their individual caseloads have become overwhelming. We heard concerns that the consequences of the increasingly burdensome caseloads contributed to lower staff morale, greater likelihood of errors, and slower eligibility determinations. There was also consensus that clients ultimately suffer in such an environment. As one eligibility worker put it, "There are times when I am not the social worker that I should be. Workers would do a much better job [for clients] if their caseloads were lower."At the time of our site visit, there was a growing consensus at all levels of the agency that the caseloads had become so severe that a more comprehensive

approach to technology and administrative restructuring was needed to truly improve the efficiency with which SNAP cases are processed.

Despite their dissatisfaction, staff recognized that hiring significantly more eligibility workers was not feasible given the economic climate. Still, virtually all local office staff with whom we spoke expressed hope due to the 2012 expansion of the intake-ongoing pilot to 13 of the 22 local offices. Eligibility workers explained that the pilot is the state's most direct attempt to combat the ever-increasing workload. And, as one supervisor noted, staff were "… very open to trying the split because the workload has gotten so bad."

At the time of data collection, it was too early to assess the impact of the expanded pilot. Staff from the two original offices were very supportive of the change and credited the new approach as the main reason they could keep up with rising caseloads. They cited two key benefits of the split. First, the ability to choose either intake or ongoing case maintenance means they can work in an area that best suits their skills and abilities. Second, the split enabled them to focus on a more discrete set of tasks, which can improve efficiency. One of the local office managers from the early adopting offices was adamant that "No one wants to go back to how it was before!" Similarly, an eligibility worker indicated that her job satisfaction was "2 out of 10 before the split, and now it is 9 out of 10. I would never want to go back."

Union leadership, however, voiced skepticism about the long-term benefits of the pilot because caseloads will remain too high regardless of how a single case is divided among workers. In addition, a union official made the point—and several local office managers agreed—that the intake/ongoing split cannot be effective in smaller offices where there are not enough eligibility workers to effectively divide responsibilities. In those smaller offices, eligibility workers would still have to cover all aspects of a case to account for absences, vacations, or spikes in demand to avoid significant backlogs of applications, recertifications, or both. Despite these concerns, the union official indicated that the union agreed to the expansion because it recognized the need for trying new approaches to handle the high SNAP caseloads.

Local office staff also expressed some dissatisfaction with what they perceive to be the inconsistent application of policies and procedures by their colleagues. A number of staff suggested that DTA's efforts to communicate with eligibility workers about policy changes or to clarify procedures are not always clear and concise and are often muddled in legal jargon. The result then is that "policy can be interpreted differently by different staff." Other workers believe that the training of new eligibility workers is uneven, which makes some cohorts of new-hires better prepared than others. In addition, staff also told us that BEACON III—DTA's sophisticated, rules-based eligibility determination system—exacerbates the inconsistency across workers because it requires a more detailed understanding of SNAP policies and procedures.

C. Lessons Learned

The successes and struggles of Massachusetts' modernization efforts suggest five lessons that could inform future modernizations there or in other states:

1. **Planning and sequencing modernization efforts is challenging, but might boost efficiency.** The review of the North Shore office document imaging pilot highlighted the need for a document management system to be fully integrated with BEACON. This would eliminate the need to maintain a paper-based filing system, which staff felt was extremely inefficient for eligibility workers. The sheer volume of documents can be

overwhelming: according to one estimate, the agency processes approximately 2.1 million paper verifications per year (Public Consulting Group 2009). Maintaining paper records is expensive (for example, copying and storage), and reliance on paper case files limits agency-wide flexibility in terms of caseload-sharing across offices. Or, as one of the regional directors we spoke with put it: "We need to get rid of paper. When you have paper, you shackle yourself to an office." Following the Public Consulting Group report that reviewed the pilot, a senior state office indicated that decision makers "got bogged down" trying to develop a perfect system that would be fully integrated with BEACON. Because an agreement was never reached, managers reported that the delays the state faced in implementing BEACON III dampened enthusiasm for another technology-related project.

2. **Increasing staff levels might not be sufficient to reduce worker burden.** Unlike in other states, Massachusetts responded to increased caseloads by increasing the number of eligibility workers. Adding staff also increased costs to DTA for processing benefits. Although staff levels increased, some modernization changes that other states had implemented (such as document imaging to support a paperless case file system and a well-supported, client-preferred online application) were not in place. Caseloads rose so sharply, and in the absence of some technology-based modernizations, that even with new staff the eligibility workers saw their workloads increase heavily, such that individual caseworkers focused more on the increased burden than on the addition of workers to the team. This suggests that more could be done to reduce worker burden in Massachusetts.

3. **Policy simplifications can reduce clients' barriers to access and staff burden.**
   DTA implemented policy simplifications, particularly aimed at elderly and disabled clients, that also eased burden on staff. For example, the agency shortened the application from four pages to two pages for elderly clients. DTA also eliminated the recertification interview requirement for elderly and disabled households with no earned income. These simplifications represent relatively inexpensive ways to remove barriers to access for at-risk clients, while also reducing burden on staff by minimizing the time it takes to process applications and verifications.

4. **Local staff prefer clear communications and close involvement with changes.** Some staff complained about unclear communication of policy changes. Typically, policy changes are communicated through operations memos, which are distributed by state staff via an emailed link to the memo stored on the agency's intranet. Although the intranet stores all operations memos outlining policy changes back to 2000, staff reported that the number of changes sometimes overwhelms them with information and, therefore, eligibility workers have an uneven understanding and, in some cases, inconsistent implementation of policy changes. Just as staff wanted better top-down communication, several local office staff also expressed the desire to have a greater bottom-up role in planning and implementing modernization. Local office staff voiced concerns that their needs, opinions, and insight were not always taken into account, even though the changes would affect them most directly. One exception noted by a number of staff was how eligibility workers and local office managers worked closely to implement the intake/ongoing split in the two offices that first implemented the restructuring. Staff in those offices credited the implementation strategy as a key reason for the success of the initiative. In those locations, eligibility workers and managers

worked together during the planning process and implementation process. Most importantly, the local office staff provided input into which functional area they would be assigned, which enabled them to self-select the areas they enjoyed the most and for which they were best suited. According to one supervisor, "People chose what they wanted to do and went to their strengths." When the office managers and supervisors met to make final assignments, most of the staff had selected well based on their skills and abilities. If a choice had to be made between staff, seniority was the deciding factor. A similar, but more formal process was implemented in the 11 other pilot offices when the effort was expanded.

5. **Cultivating relationships with community partners has helped reach underserved populations and improve program access.** The agency's efforts to seek partnerships with community organizations and build a network of community partners has enabled DTA to leverage the relationships these organizations have with potential clients. Community partners target and help reach low-income and underserved populations. DTA has been able to take advantage of these organizations' access to these populations and their ability to provide personal attention to these clients. Working with partners has enabled DTA to promote the program more effectively, increasing program access. It has also taken some pressure off of local office staff by allowing community partners to conduct activities such as application assistance and to collect and submit verification documents on a client's behalf.

6. **Clients also need clear communication about changes.** Clients can use the MAP to review certain details about their case status to answer questions on their own, without involving a staff member. However, the benefits of the MAP are not always communicated to clients by eligibility workers. A local office manager said this is because DTA has not fully explained to eligibility workers what information MAP is able to provide to clients. If eligibility workers encouraged clients to make use of the tool, it could potentially reduce the burden on workers to provide this basic information.

V. CASE STUDY OF MODERNIZATION: UTAH

Utah's primary goals in modernizing its SNAP operations were to increase program efficiency and increase ease of access for clients. Modernization in Utah proceeded incrementally, beginning in 1997, and affected virtually every aspect of SNAP administration. The state has used data, technology, and automation to increase efficiency. It reorganized its administrative structure, standardizing procedures statewide to equalize staff workload. Finally, in rolling out the online application and transitioning from the traditional, in-person case worker model to a modern virtual call center model, the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) opened up new program contact points for clients to apply for benefits. Together, these initiatives completely changed how clients apply for SNAP in Utah.

During the period of Utah's comprehensive administrative and technological changes, outcome measures were generally positive. DWS operations became more efficient, as costs dropped sharply when accounting for the substantial caseload increases, and the department reduced payment error rates from very high levels in 2000 to levels at or below the national average for the rest of the decade. Application processing timeliness was temporarily disrupted during the period of Utah's most significant technological and administrative changes, which also occurred during the height of the economic downturn of 2008 and 2009. However, when Utah completed its major transitions, timeliness returned to its long-term average level of about 80 percent.[61] Clients and staff had generally positive opinions of the changes in Utah during the study period. Overall, Utah managed its substantial changes to administrative structure without causing major disruptions to program access. The department met its primary goal of increasing efficiency, even during a time of unprecedented application and caseload increases.

In this chapter, we summarize the major modernization initiatives implemented in Utah. We also explain how staff and clients reacted to the changes. Finally, we describe how key program outcomes changed from 2000 to 2012.

A. Description of Modernization

Utah focused its modernization efforts on technological improvements and reorganizing DWS's administrative structure, with less emphasis on policy changes and very little formal outreach to partner organizations. Utah depends on its technological improvements and automation, even more than most other states with significant modernization initiatives. The state introduced document imaging in 1999, which paved the way for electronic case records, call center operations, and the portability of eligibility work. In 2008 Utah rolled out its statewide online application, allowing clients to apply for benefits from any computer with an Internet connection. Two years later the department upgraded its eligibility system, replacing the legacy mainframe system with a modern, web-based application, with the goal of increasing staff efficiency and accuracy.

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[61] Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness.

In 2009, DWS streamlined its administrative structure. The department consolidated eligibility operations across the state by eliminating the five administrative regions and creating the unified Eligibility Services Division (ESD). The department standardized operations to improve staff efficiency and reduce costs in the face of increasing workloads.

In this section, we describe Utah's approach to modernization based on our case study that captured both extant data and staff and client perspectives across the state (Figure V.1). We follow the description with an overview of the major modernization initiatives in the state in each of the four categories of focus for this study. We also provide a description of SNAP procedures from the perspective of a client.

Figure V.1. Sites Visited in Utah and Other Notable Cities

Note: Provo is the site of a DWS call center but was not visited for the study.

1.   Approach to Modernization

DWS's primary modernization goal was to improve the efficiency of SNAP operations in the state. Department leaders describe their core mission as maximizing the number of accurate eligibility determinations per dollar. The desire to increase efficiency guided many of Utah's key changes, including upgrading the department's technology and streamlining its policies and administrative structure. The department also standardized disparate procedures in local offices across the state. Efforts to increase efficiency took on added urgency during the economic downturn beginning in 2008, as caseloads increased sharply and the state mandated cuts to the department's budget, leaving the department with less money to process more applications. Monthly caseloads increased by 240 percent from July 2000 to December 2011 (see Figure V.2).

Figure V.2. Number of Cases per Month, 2000- 2011, Utah
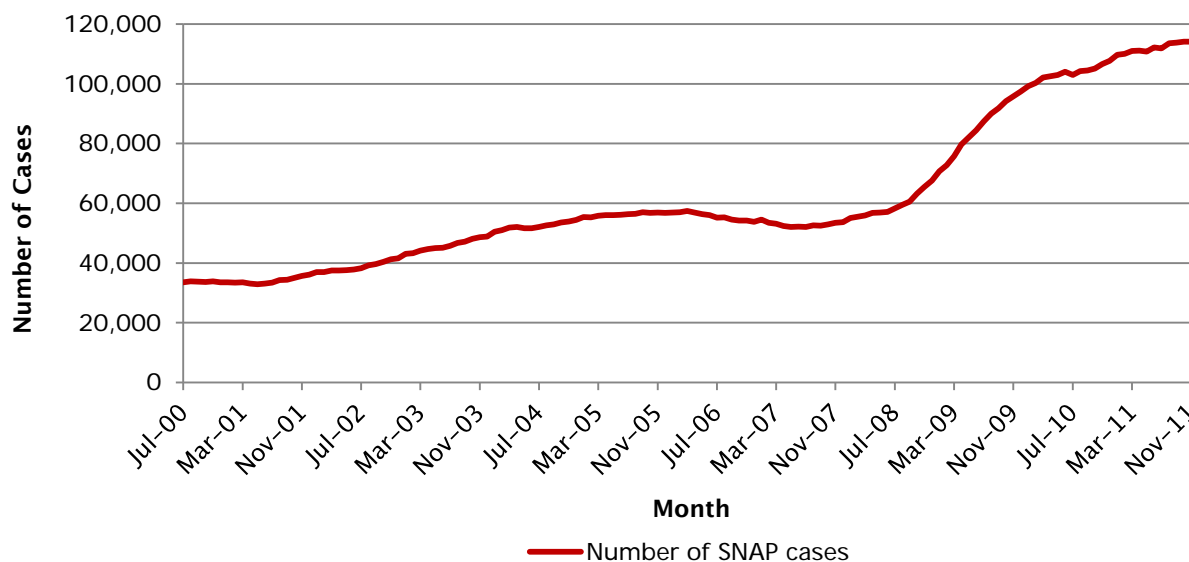
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Utah DWS.

Caseload growth was particularly rapid in urban areas, resulting in large imbalances in caseloads for eligibility workers across the state (see Figure V.3). DWS alleviated this problem by equalizing caseloads per worker when it transitioned to the virtual call center in 2009.

Utah's secondary goal in modernizing SNAP was to make it easier for clients to access the program. Due to Utah's extensive rural areas, physical access to DWS's local offices varies widely across the state. Moving increasing amounts of customer interaction to the Internet and call center contact points was intended to help equalize clients' access to benefits.

The technological initiatives that form the core of Utah's modernization efforts were designed to address its goals of improving efficiency and increasing ease of access for clients:

- Document imaging and electronic case records support the portability of work

- The online application and client interface expand client contact points

Figure V.3. Urban and Rural Caseloads by Month, 2000- 2011, Utah
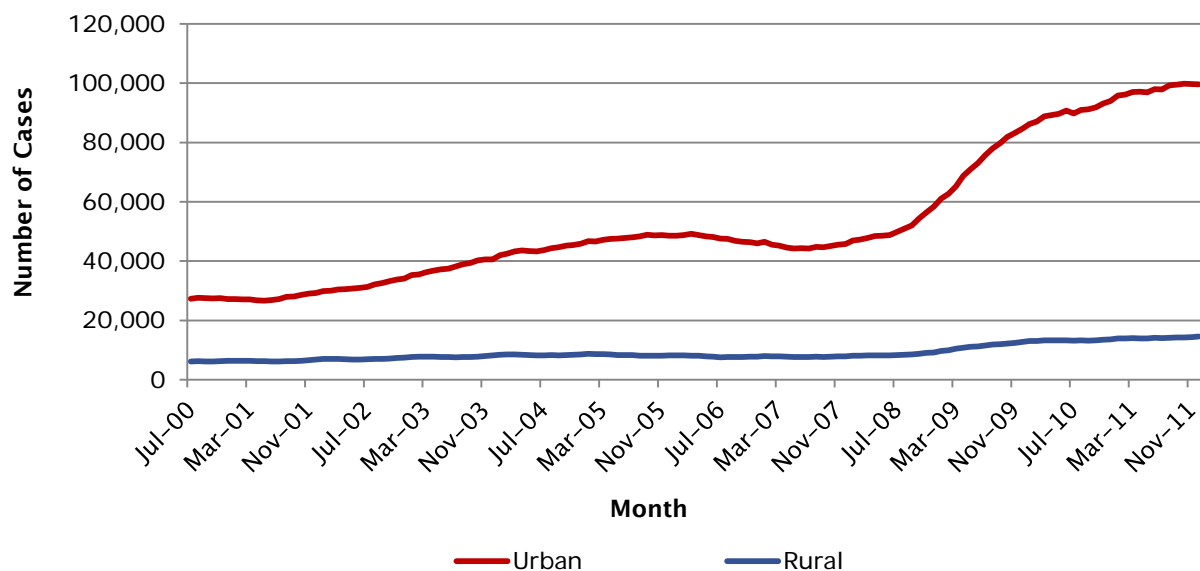
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Utah DWS.

- An updated automated eligibility system (Electronic Resource Eligibility Product, or eRep) adds automation, to improve efficiency and accuracy

- Automated links between eRep and both the online application and the data verification system (eFind) to improve efficiency and accuracy

The reorganization of DWS consolidated eligibility operations from five regions into a single statewide system. The statewide system operated as a unified, virtual call center that processed all cases in the state. This centralized processing equalized both the number of cases per worker and customer service for clients. As part of the reorganization in 2009, eligibility and employment functions in the department were separated. All eligibility functions are handled through the virtual call center, whereas employment functions remain in the local employment centers.

These modernization efforts occurred incrementally, in stages designed to build toward departmental leadership's long-term goals. In 1998, management considered consolidating Utah's eligibility operations. However, at that time DWS did not have the technological infrastructure necessary to merge statewide operations. Over the next 10 years, Utah implemented changes such as document imaging, electronic case records, and regional call centers to lay the groundwork for the consolidation of operations that ultimately occurred in 2009.

DWS continued to enhance technological innovations after implementing them. The modern, Windows-based eligibility system, eRep, is regularly upgraded with improved functionality. DWS's online client interface, myCase, was rolled out in 2010 with basic account information. Since then, the department has added electronic notices and alerts, online chat with eligibility workers, change reporting, online case reviews, and third-party access to client cases. Likewise, DWS's data verification system, eFind, was implemented in 2004 and was subsequently enhanced by expanding the data sources it links to, and by enabling automatic interaction with other DWS systems.

Similarly, DWS has been willing to experiment with novel processes and procedures, expanding those that worked and discontinuing those that were less successful. In 2011 the department piloted a pay-for-performance scheme that rewarded eligibility workers with financial bonuses for superior performance. The pilot appeared effective in improving performance and, in January 2012, it was expanded statewide as a voluntary opt-in program for eligibility staff. By contrast DWS discontinued a practice that began in March 2011 of dedicating two teams of eligibility workers to fielding status calls from clients when it became apparent that it was not an efficient use of staff resources.

While planning and implementing modernization changes, management actively sought input from staff at all levels. During the planning stages of major changes, management convened work groups composed of staff from offices across the state. Work group members provided real-time feedback to planners about changes under development and helped shape Utah's modernization initiatives.

The department's relationship with the state legislature enabled department managers to make long-term plans. The legislature consistently directed DWS to improve the efficiency of its operations while providing the department considerable flexibility in how to do so. The consistent legislative direction and long-term flexibility appeared unique among the states in this study.

Direction from the legislature has occasionally taken the form of specified cost reductions, as in 2010 when the state legislature mandated a 6 percent reduction in staffing at DWS. The department exceeded this target, cutting staff by 10 percent through attrition. Amid discussions in the legislature about the potential efficiency gains of privatizing benefit delivery, DWS leadership sought to demonstrate the department's ability to cut costs while coping with the increasing caseload. By 2010, the average monthly caseload had more than tripled since 2000, rising to more than 100,000 cases.

2. Summary of Changes, by Category

a. Restructuring of Administrative Functions

DWS was created in 1997, consolidating all employment, training, and assistance programs in a single agency. From 1997 to 2009, Utah was divided into five regions that administered eligibility operations. Policies and procedures varied across the state as regions experimented with different business models. The former Central region established a call center in 2001 (Figure V.4), followed by the North region. These regions provided the model for the statewide structure that was eventually put in place. Other regions continued to use the more traditional in-person case worker model for their eligibility operations for most of the period leading up to the 2009 reorganization. As caseloads grew disproportionately across the state, eligibility workers in the regions containing Salt Lake City and the surrounding metropolitan areas experienced substantially higher workloads than case workers in rural areas in the state.

In 2009, DWS reorganized its administrative structure, unifying and standardizing operations throughout the state. With this reorganization, eligibility operations were no longer administered regionally. Although staff remained spread across the state, the administrative structure was unified, with policies and procedures standardized throughout the state. The new structure removed the caseload disparities across the state and created a common business model for staff and clients. During this reorganization, DWS split its employment and eligibility functions into two separate divisions, the ESD and the Workforce Development Division (WDD). ESD handles all eligibility functions, including processing applications, conducting eligibility and recertification interviews,

Figure V.4. Summary of Changes to Administrative Functions, Utah

Description of Activity	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Call Center		pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide
Answer general questions		pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide
Provide account information		pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide
Conduct initial interviews		pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide
Conduct recertification interviews		pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide
Process changes submitted by callers		pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide
Process changes submitted online							pilot	pilot	pilot	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide
Process imaged documents		pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	pilot	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide
Centralization of Staff for:													
Processing online applications										statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide
Conducting interviews or determining eligibility										statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide
Case monitoring										statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide
Telecommuting						pilot	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide
Outstationed Staff	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide	statewide

Source: Information reported to Mathematica by Utah DWS.

    □ Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.

    ■ Initiative in statewide implementation.

making eligibility and benefits determinations, and processing reported changes. WDD staff members work in the local employment offices, providing employment services as well as application assistance for SNAP and other benefit programs.

Since 2009, ESD has conducted all eligibility work in Utah through the statewide virtual call center. Unlike the other four study states, all eligibility workers in Utah are call center staff. These staff work from one of four physical call centers, from home as telecommuters, or from work spaces in some DWS local offices. Eligibility specialists are organized into teams of 16 or 17 people, each headed by one supervisor. There were 41 eligibility teams as of early 2012. Though many teams have all their members concentrated in a single office, others have members spread across the state.

The statewide virtual call center standardized eligibility services across the state. All contact with eligibility workers is over the telephone or through online chat. Each team has approximately the same number of eligibility workers and handles about the same number of cases. Although caseloads are maintained at the individual-worker level, incoming calls are handled at the team level. Eligibility workers take calls in chronological order from their team's queue, processing any changes or actions prompted by the call. Though a case may be edited by multiple eligibility workers in this way, the individual worker assigned to the case is ultimately responsible for the accuracy and final determination of the case.

The state's eRep system assigns new cases to teams to maintain equal caseload sizes. When a client calls the call center for the first time, the interactive voice response (IVR) directs the call to the case's team. The first available eligibility worker takes the call and usually assigns himself or herself

the case. That caseworker then ultimately makes the eligibility determination for that case, though future calls would likely be handled by other members of the eligibility team.

Eligibility teams are specialized to handle specific types of cases. Most eligibility teams are specialized by the types of programs they handle—for instance, SNAP, medical assistance, or child care assistance. Other teams are specialized by client subgroups: Spanish-speaking clients; elderly, blind, or disabled clients; and Native American clients all have specialized teams.

Although eligibility staff are no longer available to clients in the state's local employment centers, the centers remain the primary physical access points for clients applying for SNAP. The centers are staffed by employment counselors who provide employment services for WDD. All employment centers have banks of computers that clients can use to fill out the online application as well as telephones clients can use to call the virtual call center. Clients can also check their case status through the myCase web portal using computers in any local employment center. All client interaction with eligibility workers is done via telephone or the Internet; it is not done in person at the employment centers. However, WDD employment counselors can help clients apply for SNAP. Though it is not their primary function, the counselors can provide basic assistance with online or paper applications, or with the myCase system, if requested.

WDD's primary mission is to help people obtain jobs. Employment counselors often connect clients with a wider array of services than they initially sought when entering an employment center. When clients come to the offices to apply for SNAP benefits, WDD staff members help them apply and then offer them information about other employment services, job search resources, and training classes. Employment counselors will also make clients who come in for job services aware of assistance programs they may be eligible for, including SNAP.

b. Expanding Uses of Technology

DWS's technology changes were designed to support the department's operational goals. Some technological enhancements were required to facilitate the administrative consolidation described earlier. Other changes improved client access or increased staff efficiency and accuracy. The major technological changes are discussed in the following pages by function, and are illustrated in Figure V.5. Table V.1 provides an overview of the technological changes and their names.

Utah developed new telephonic systems that were necessary to transition from a traditional case worker model to a statewide call center model. The IVR system directs clients to the appropriate call center queues. Clients can identify themselves by entering their case number, which enables them to report changes and obtain basic information about their case over the telephone without having to wait to speak with an eligibility worker. IVR menu options enable clients to indicate the purpose for their call.

Document imaging and statewide electronic case records, which enable the portability of work across the state, had to be in place for Utah to transition its eligibility operations to a virtual call center model. Imaging began in Utah in 2001. The process was largely centralized across the state in 2006, to prepare for the broader consolidation of eligibility operations. The Imaging Operations Unit, in DWS's Midvale office, images documents for most of the state. Staff at the imaging unit use two high-capacity scanners to process documents. The imaging unit processed more than 140,000 documents per month on average from 2009 to early 2012, more than two-thirds of all documents imaged in the state during that time. Imaging in areas south of Provo is conducted in the local offices by employment counselors using smaller, desktop scanners.

Figure V.5. Summary of Expanded Technology Applications, Utah

Figure V.5. Summary of Expanded Technology Applications, Utah (years 1999–2012)

Description of Activity:
- Online Screening Tool — statewide 2009–2012
- Online Application — pilot 2008, statewide 2009–2012
- Online Chat — statewide 2010–2012
- Online Account Functionality[a] — pilot 2008–2009, statewide 2010–2012
- Recertify online — statewide 2011–2012
- Electronic correspondence — statewide 2010–2012
- Report changes online — statewide 2010–2012
- Case status — pilot 2008–2009, statewide 2010–2012
- Benefit history — pilot 2008–2009, statewide 2010–2012
- Document Imaging — pilot 2000–2007, statewide 2008–2012
- Electronic Case Files — pilot 2000–2007, statewide 2008–2012
- Online Payment Portal — statewide 2009–2012
- Upgraded workflow management tools — statewide 2011–2012
- Upgraded eligibility system — pilot 2004–2007, statewide 2008–2012
- Online customer directory — statewide 2008–2012
- Online data verification system — statewide 2006–2012

Source: Information reported to Mathematica by the Utah DWS.

[a] A more sophisticated system, myCase, replaced the E-Query system, which had been instituted in 2008.

- ▢ (light) Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.
- ▣ (dark) Initiative in statewide implementation.

Table V.1. Descriptions of Expanded Technology Applications, Utah

Technology	Function
eRep	eRep is a web-based automated eligibility system that determines eligibility for SNAP and other programs. It is integrated with the online application, the myCase client interface, and eFind. eRep is a rules-based system, which means that the eligibility worker enters the evidence for a case and the system automatically generates program eligibility determinations.
Full Kit	This is the informal name for the workload prioritization function within eRep. Full Kit organizes eligibility workers' cases according to those that are ready to be processed.
eFind	eFind is a data verification system that draws on 21 state and federal databases to retrieve or verify client information.
myCase	myCase is an online client interface that contains an online screening tool, the online application, and client account information. Through myCase, clients can chat with eligibility workers, retrieve electronic correspondence, and report changes to their case status.
IVR	The IVR system supports the virtual call center. When a client contacts the call center, he or she is prompted to enter his or her case number. This directs the client to the eligibility team handling the case. If the client does not enter a case number, he or she will reach an eligibility worker who will direct the call.

Imaged documents are organized and assigned to case records using a two-dimensional (2D) barcode system and dedicated indexing machines. 2D barcodes contain more information than traditional barcodes. Standard DWS documents contain 2D barcodes indicating the document type. When documents are generated from a specific client's account, either by eligibility staff or printed from the client's myCase account, the barcode also contains the client's case number. DWS's

indexing software reads the barcodes and automatically assigns documents to the proper cases. Documents not containing case numbers in the barcode (including documents filled out by hand or non-DWS documents, such as pay stubs), called unstructured documents, must be indexed manually. Imaging unit staff reported that the 2D barcodes are much more efficient and effective than conventional barcodes and that their use has drastically reduced staff time required to index documents with barcodes. As a result, most staff indexing time is dedicated to indexing unstructured documents. Staff in the Imaging Operations unit index all unstructured documents in the state using Kofax indexing software.

DWS has made many resources available online to improve client access. Since 2008, clients have been able to apply for SNAP using Utah's online application. Using an electronic signature, clients can submit an application without traveling to a local office. The online application was integrated with the myCase online client interface when it was launched in November 2010. The myCase portal also contains an online screening tool that potential applicants can use to determine if they may be eligible for benefits without investing the time to complete the full application. It also enables clients to check their application status and benefit level online. They can complete the recertification form online, chat with an eligibility worker, and report changes through the myCase portal. Clients can opt to receive electronic notifications and alerts through myCase, rather than hard-copy correspondence through the mail. Electronic notices are faster than paper notices and they allow DWS to know when a notice has been viewed. Clients can access myCase on any computer with an Internet connection and on dedicated computer terminals in local employment centers. It replaced Utah's previous online account system, E-Query, which had been in place since 2008.

DWS put in place other technological innovations to improve efficiency and accuracy for its eligibility staff. By June 2010 the department had fully transitioned to a modern, rules-based eligibility system, eRep. It replaced the legacy code-based Public Assistance Case Management Information System (PACMIS) system. Rules-based systems differ from code-based systems in that the eligibility worker enters all the evidence about a case and the system's internal logic produces the determination. DWS designed eRep as a web application with drop-down menus and other point-and-click features familiar to most computer users. Under the previous system, workers entered codes into a direct operating system (DOS) interface and could manually overrule system results they believed were incorrect. Under eRep, if workers disagree with the system's determination, they must see where they entered evidence incorrectly. DWS implemented eRep to reduce human errors and ensure that eligibility workers think about the whole spectrum of evidence required for each case.

DWS has made several improvements to eRep since the system's initiation. In 2011 the department implemented an upgraded workload prioritization feature, informally referred to as Full Kit. This enhancement helps eligibility workers see the status of their active cases. In particular, the system helps them prioritize cases that are likely ready for determination, rather than working through cases in chronological order. Before this upgrade, workers had to open cases repeatedly to see if all the evidence necessary for determination was present. With Full Kit, workers can more efficiently open only the cases that likely have all the evidence assembled. Additionally, since May 2011 eRep automatically pulls data from certain fields in the online application, a functionality DWS hopes to expand in the future.

The last major technological innovation designed to increase worker efficiency and accuracy is Utah's data verification system, eFind. Activated in 2004, eFind pulls data from 21 state and federal databases to retrieve or verify client information, including Social Security records, prison records, immigrant status verification, other federal benefits records, child support enforcement, department of motor vehicles, birth and death records, unemployment insurance, state wage data, and workers' compensation records. Workers use eFind through eRep, selecting which databases to search based on the verification required in each particular case.

Modernization in Utah from the Client's Perspective

Utah's modernization initiatives have significantly changed how clients apply for and interact with SNAP. The transition from the traditional in-person case worker model to the virtual call center environment and the introduction of the online application and myCase web portal have altered clients' experiences with SNAP in Utah. It is no longer necessary for clients to appear in person in a local office to apply for benefits and they no longer work with dedicated case workers. Clients can conduct all interaction and business over the Internet and through the call center.

Application. Clients in Utah are strongly encouraged to apply for SNAP online, using any computer with an Internet connection or the computers in DWS's local employment centers. Before applying, clients can use the online screening tool to see if they are likely to be eligible. If clients need help applying online, the myCase embedded chat function can connect them with an eligibility worker. If they are applying in a local employment center, employment counselors can assist them. (Clients wishing to apply on paper can also receive a paper form and assistance at these centers.)

Certification. Upon submitting an application, clients receive instructions to call the virtual call center to complete an eligibility interview. Clients who apply online or in person receive this instruction immediately, allowing them to call right after submitting their application. The IVR system routes their call to the appropriate eligibility team and the first available worker takes the call. The eligibility worker pulls up the application as a portable document format (PDF) file and fills gaps in the electronic case record based on the answers to the eligibility interview questions. During the interview, the worker uses the eFind data verification system to tailor questions, skipping those that are unnecessary (because the worker already has the answer) and asking those prompted by eFind results.

Clients may interview in person if desired. When an applicant requests an in-person interview, an eligibility specialist will generally travel to a local employment center near the applicant to complete the interview, but the ease of accommodating such a request varies by location. Not all local employment centers have nearby eligibility specialists. Thus, eligibility specialists might travel a considerable distance to conduct in-person interviews in some places in the state.

At the end of the interview, the eligibility specialist will inform the applicant what verification documents are necessary to make the eligibility determination. The list of verification documents will also be available on the client's myCase online account and a list will be mailed to the client. Verification documents can be submitted through the mail, by fax, email, or in person at a local employment center. Fax machines are available in employment centers for document submission.

Recertification. The recertification process in Utah mirrors the certification process. Clients can recertify online, through myCase, or using a paper recertification form they receive in the mail. Recertification interviews are generally via telephone through the virtual call center, though in-person interviews are available upon request.

Case maintenance. Clients can manage their SNAP cases through the myCase online client interface. Functions of the interface include receiving notifications, signing up to receive e-mail or text message alerts when new notifications are available, reporting changes in circumstances, and chatting with eligibility specialists to address questions.

Clients can receive assistance with using myCase from employment counselors in local offices, but other in-person assistance for active cases is not available. Employment counselors cannot answer specific questions about clients' benefits or eligibility. To report changes or to receive answers for more complex questions about SNAP and the application process, clients must either call the virtual call center or chat with eligibility specialists through myCase.

c. Partnering with Community Organizations

DWS's links to community partner organizations remain informal, as the organization has focused on completing its significant internal reforms, described earlier. As of early 2012, the department planned to pursue more formal links with community partner organizations as the pace of its internal changes slows. DWS planned to develop stronger, more formal relationships with community partners to increase outreach to eligible people not participating in SNAP.

As of early 2012 DWS worked informally with community organizations that serve low-income clients. Many of these organizations offer assistance in completing the online application. In 2010, DWS provided to a few organizations computers that can be used to complete the online application. However, as of the time of this study's data collection, DWS had not broadly pursued outstationing staff at community organizations to assist clients directly in accessing benefits.

In January 2012, DWS introduced third-party access to myCase. This advance makes it possible for community organizations and other client advocates to access myCase and apply for benefits on behalf of clients who have trouble applying on their own. Through third-party access, clients can authorize their designated representative to have partial or complete access to their myCase account. Under partial access, third parties are able to view details of the client's account, but cannot make changes. Under complete access, third parties have full access to take any account action on behalf of the client, such as reporting changes or completing the online recertification form for the client. As part of the roll-out process, DWS provided training to staff at some community organizations on how to use the system. Individuals who received the training reported during interviews that the training was excellent and that the third-party access system was very helpful. They looked forward to increased interaction with DWS in the future.

d. Policy Simplification

In the course of modernizing SNAP, Utah adopted several significant changes to its administrative policies. Some of these changes were necessary to enact the technological and administrative changes described previously. Others were designed to increase the efficiency of the program in the face of rising caseloads.

In order to transition from the traditional, in-person case worker model to the statewide virtual call center model Utah put in place in 2009, DWS had to obtain waivers from FNS exempting it from certain eligibility and certification policies. Utah obtained waivers to allow initial and recertification interviews to be conducted over the telephone for all clients, without documenting client hardship. The initial waiver, granted in 2003, allowed telephone interviews for recertification interviews (Figure V.6). In 2006, DWS received a waiver allowing telephone interviews during initial certification for half the caseload. In 2008, FNS granted a waiver extending certification telephone interviews to the entire caseload. In 2007, FNS approved the statewide waiver of interview scheduling requirements, expanding a policy change piloted the previous year. This change allowed interviews to be conducted whenever a client contacted the call center, rather than during a previously scheduled appointment. A third policy change that facilitated the transition to the virtual call center model was issuing EBT cards by mail rather than in person in local offices. Under the model in place statewide since 2009, inactive EBT cards are sent to clients by mail when an application is submitted. When clients are determined to be eligible, the EBT cards are activated and ready for use. EBT cards are available in local offices as well on a case-by-case basis. EBT cards have been distributed by mail in some parts of Utah since 2007.

Figure V.6. Summary of Policy Changes, Utah

Description of Activity	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Shortened or Simplified Application				██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██
Waived Face-to-ace Interviews[a]			▒▒	▒▒	▒▒	▒▒	██	██	██	██	██	██
Waived Interview Scheduling Requirement					░░	██	██	██	██	██	██	██
Simplified Reporting					██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██
EBT Card Distribution by Mail						▒▒	▒▒	██	██	██	██	██
Break-in-Service Policy		██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██
Standard Utility Allowance					██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██
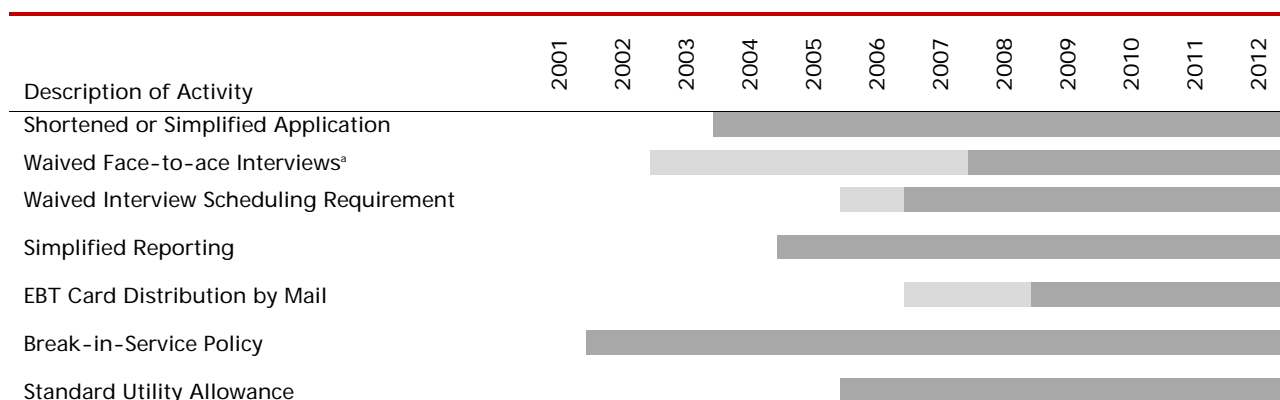
Source: Information reported to Mathematica by the Utah DWS.

[a] This waiver allowed Utah to conduct eligibility interviews over the telephone, rather than in person.

▒▒ Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.
██ Initiative in statewide implementation.

Other policy changes Utah enacted in the course of modernization were intended to streamline the program, by reducing reporting requirements, reducing client churning on and off the program, and improving communication with clients. Since 2005, DWS has had simplified income reporting for all households other than elderly or disabled households with earned income. Other households have to report income changes only during their six-month recertification or when their income rises above 130 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. This change reduces the frequency of reporting requirements and benefit changes and reduces the administrative burden on eligibility staff. In 2002, FNS approved a waiver for a break-in-service policy in Utah. Under this policy, clients whose eligibility has lapsed for fewer than 30 days can be reinstated to the program without submitting a new application. This relieves clients of having to repeat the entire application process if, for instance, they are slightly late in providing verification requirements during their six-month recertification. It also reduces the volume of total applications eligibility staff have to process. Finally, in 2010 FNS approved a waiver allowing DWS to give clients the option of receiving only electronic notices, rather than notices through the mail.

B. Changes in Outcomes Following Modernization

Data trends over the study period show progress in several outcomes DWS targeted for improvement. In particular, modernization changes were associated with a clear reduction in costs when accounting for the dramatic caseload increases over the study period. Average monthly costs per case fell by more than 40 percent from 2000 to 2011. Payment error rates, a particular problem for DWS at the beginning of the study period, fell sharply and remained below the national average from 2001 to 2009. Client and staff reaction to changes in Utah were generally positive.

Other outcomes showed more mixed records during the study period. Application processing time spiked to very high levels during the period of most significant transition, which coincided with the sharpest increase in application submissions in 2009 and 2010. However, timeliness and processing time quickly returned to normal levels. The following section describes these outcome measures; Appendix E contains more detailed supplementary tables.

1.   Client Access and Satisfaction

a.   Participation and Growth Rates

The average monthly number of people on SNAP more than tripled in Utah during the study period, rising from fewer than 85,000 in mid-2000 to more than 275,000 by 2011. Most of this increase occurred after the onset of the economic downturn in 2008, which is likely to have been driven by sharp increases in the poverty and unemployment rates in Utah (see Figure V.7).

Figure V.7. Trends in Monthly Average Number of SNAP Recipients and Economic Indicators, 2000–2011, Utah

Source: Participation is based on Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Utah DWS. Unemployment rates are from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Poverty rates from 2004 to 2010 are from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Briefs. Poverty rates from 2000 to 2003 are from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey.

Note: The poverty rate from 2000 through 2003 represents a two-year average. For instance, the poverty rate shown in 2003 represents the average poverty rate from 2002 through 2003.

Access to SNAP, measured by FNS' Program Access Index[62] (PAI), increased from 0.38 in 2005 to 0.56 in 2010 (Figure V.8). Additional contact points, such as the online application, might have made it easier for some clients to apply for benefits and contributed to the increase in access. However, because Utah follows the overall U.S. trend, the increase could have been driven by national factors beyond modernization in Utah. Throughout the study period, Utah's place in the state PAI rankings remained low, reaching only 44th (out of 50 states and the District of Columbia) in 2010.

Figure V.8. Trends in SNAP Program Access Index, 2005–2010, Utah
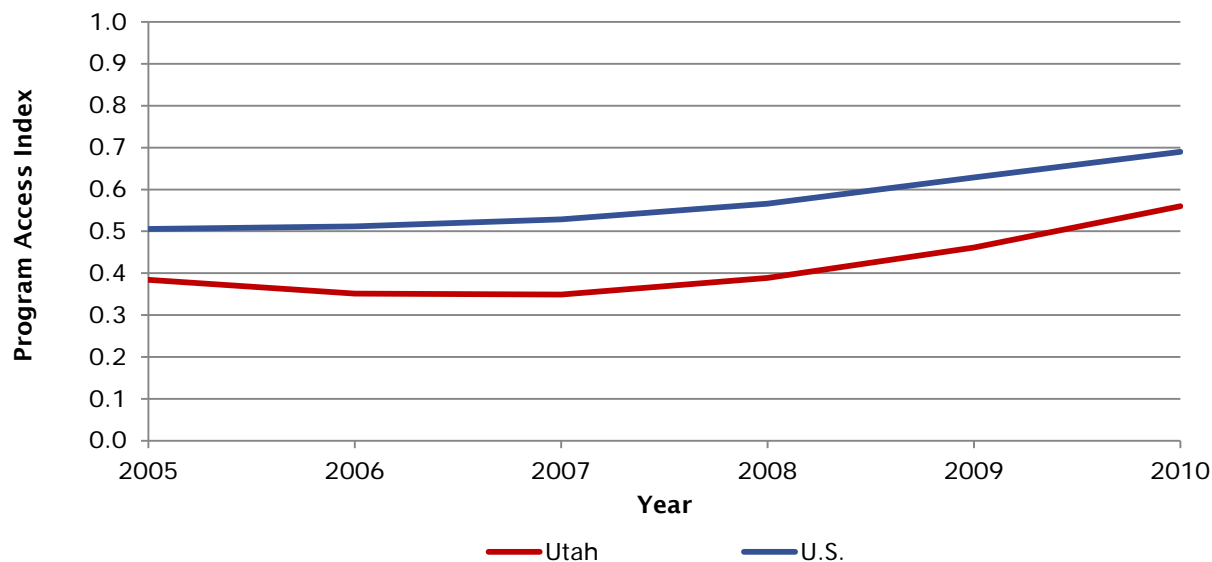
Source: PAI data are from the USDA FNS.

Note: PAI, a measure calculated by FNS, represents a ratio of the average monthly number of SNAP participants over the course of a calendar year to the number of state residents whose incomes fall below 125 percent of the federal poverty level. A higher PAI indicates greater program access.

From 2000 to 2011, demographic characteristics of the caseload varied only slightly. In particular, vulnerable populations, such as children, the elderly, and disabled clients, maintained fairly stable proportions of the caseloads throughout the study period (Figure V.9). There is no indication that modernization changes adversely affected access to benefits for these groups. Due to the increased incidence of missing racial and ethnic data, it is impossible to identify participation trends for these subgroups.

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[62] This indicator measures access by taking the average monthly number of SNAP participants over the course of a calendar year compared with the number of people in each state whose incomes fall below 125 percent of the federal poverty level.

Figure V.9. Changes in Characteristics of SNAP Recipients in Utah 2000–2011
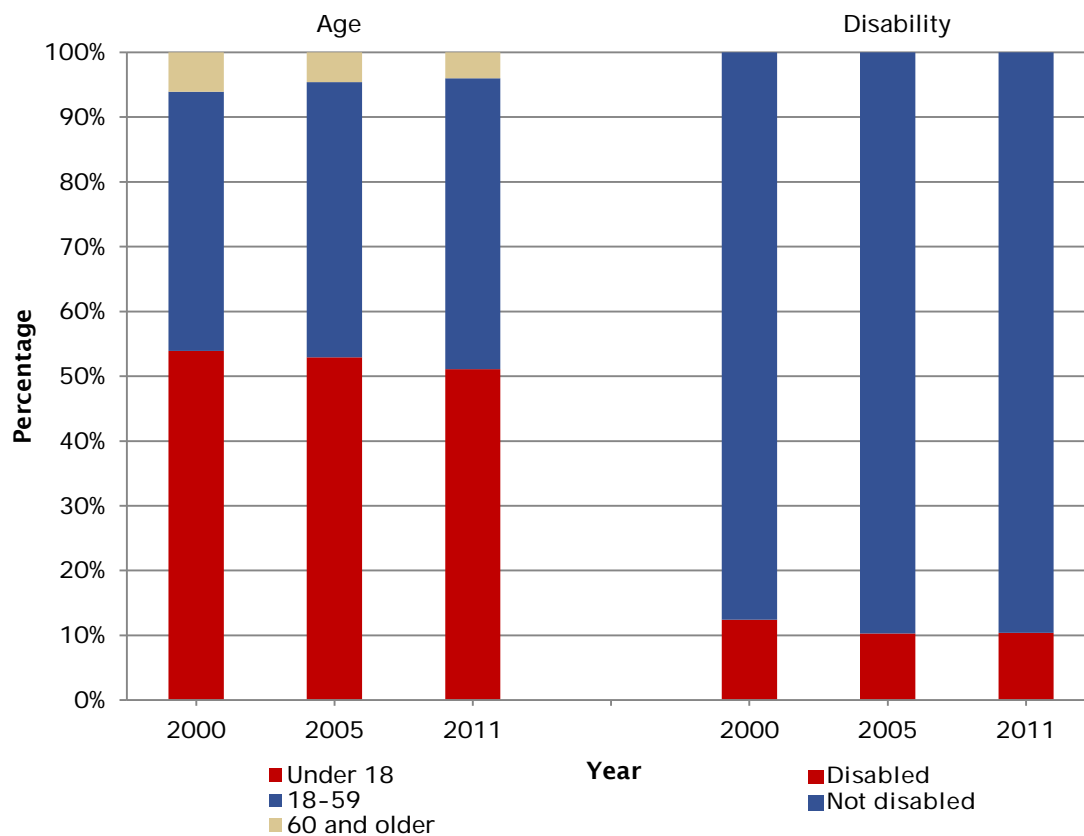
b.   Application Submissions

Application submissions increased following the 2008 financial downturn, peaking in 2010, averaging more than 14,500 applications per month (Figure V.10). Applications fell somewhat in 2011, but remained substantially higher than pre-2008 levels.

The application approval rate began to fall in 2006 and continued a gradual downward trend for the rest of the study period, decreasing from a peak of 73 percent in January 2006 to 56 percent in December 2011 (Figure V.11). Some of this decrease might be due to the increasing ease of applying during this period. The online application, available for some clients in 2007 and the entire state in 2008, makes accessing the program much easier for clients who are comfortable using computers. The ability to apply without traveling to a local office to complete eligibility interviews, available anywhere in the state beginning in 2009, might also have led to more applications. Both innovations could have reduced social stigma that previously prevented some people from applying. These decreasing barriers might have led to more people applying who were ultimately found ineligible for benefits, driving down the approval rate.

Figure V.10. Applications Processed per Month, 2000–2011, Utah
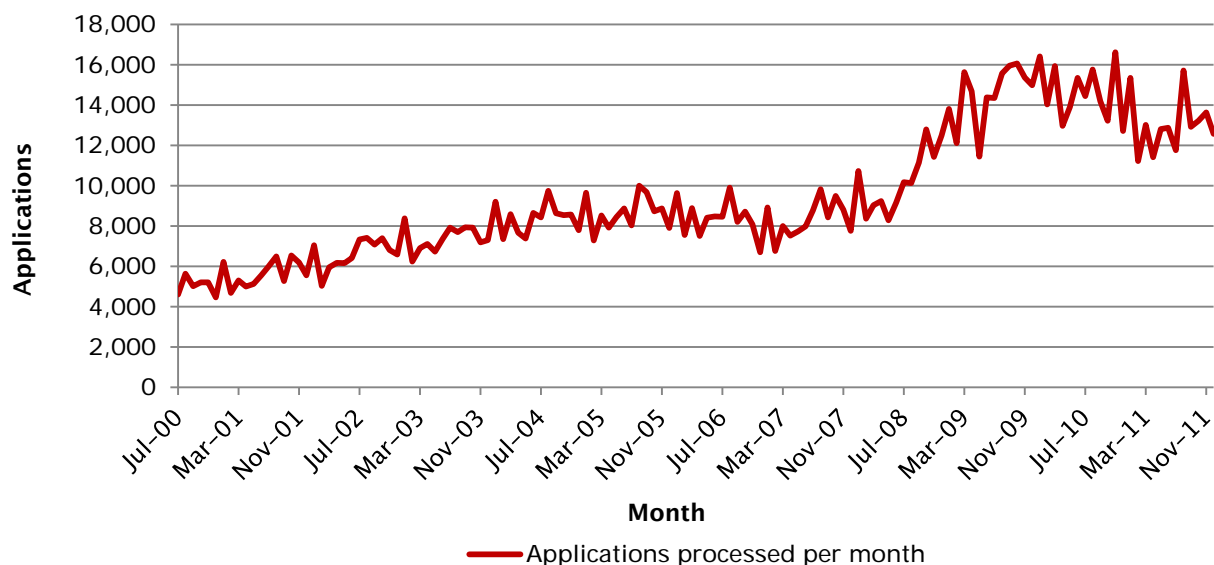
Figure V.11. Approval Rate of SNAP Applications by Month, 2000–2011, Utah
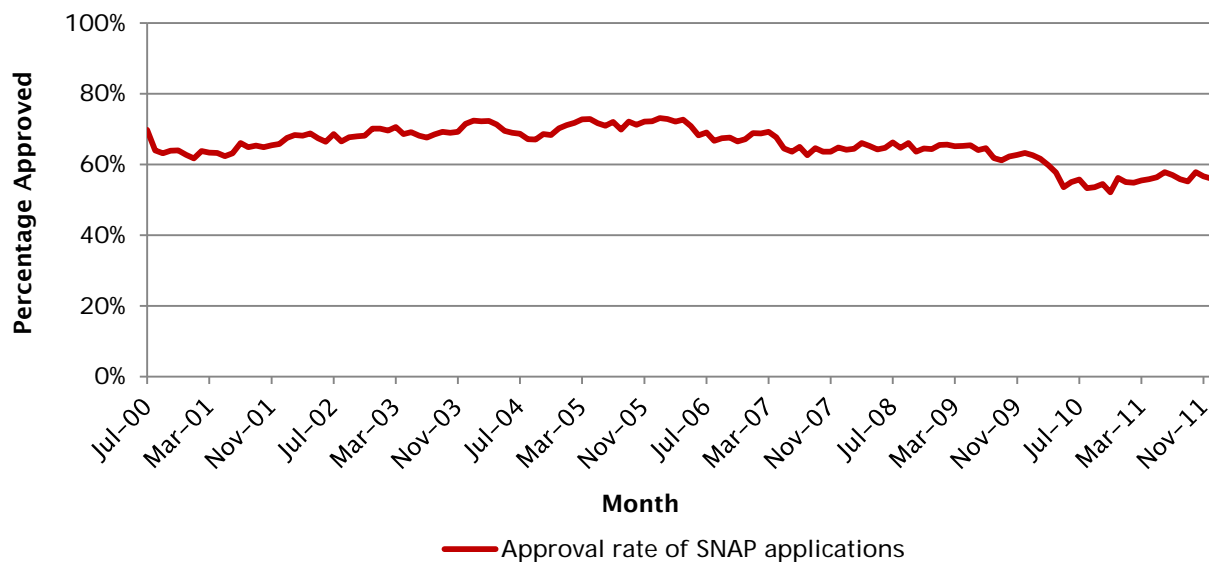
Application timeliness in Utah rose from 2000 to 2004, with more than 85 percent of applications processed within timeliness standards until 2010.[63] After 2010, Utah's timeliness rate dropped sharply to 60 percent, before trending back upward. Average application processing time mirrored approval rates, spiking above 40 days in 2010 before falling back to about 20 days in 2011

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[63] Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and 30 days for all other applications. See Figure V.12 for an explanation of the timeliness methodology used in this study.

(Figure V.12). Several factors likely led to the spike in processing time in 2010. Application submissions peaked that year, falling off notably in 2011. The department completed its transition to the new eligibility system, eRep, in 2010. For the first half of the year, before the transition was complete, eligibility staff had to work in both eRep and the legacy system it replaced, including processing cases that existed in both systems simultaneously. This transition immediately followed the centralization that occurred in 2009. Many eligibility workers reported that transitioning to a new eligibility system immediately after restructuring the department's administrative structure was overwhelming. Processing time and timeliness both moved back toward their long-term trends beginning in 2011, likely reflecting the decrease in the volume of applications received as well as the increased familiarity staff had with the new systems and processes. Processing time did not vary between urban and rural areas during the study period.

Figure V.12. Average SNAP Application Processing Time and Timeliness, 2000–2011, Utah

The percentage of new enrollments in each month that had been on SNAP in the previous two months, a measure of how frequently clients cycled on and off the program, remained fairly low throughout the study period (Figure V.13). The incidence of cycling, or churning, peaked in late 2006 and early 2007, declined through 2009, and began rising again.

Figure V.13. Trends in SNAP Reenrollment, 2000–2011, Utah
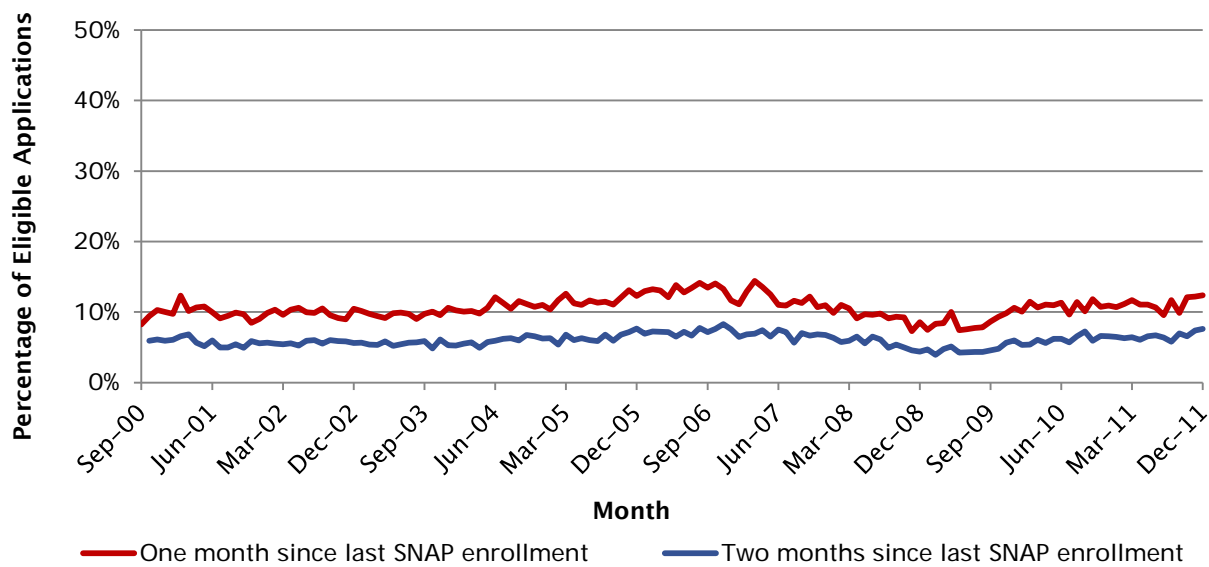
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Utah DWS.

c.   Clients' Use of New Points of Contact

The modernization process in Utah has altered how clients interact with SNAP. The 2009 DWS reorganization shifted client interaction away from the local offices and toward the statewide virtual call center and online application and client interface. The availability of the online application at any computer with an Internet connection has improved access for clients comfortable with using computers.

Based on focus group discussions, younger, technically savvy clients found online access to the SNAP application and case management functions convenient and appreciated not having to travel to a local office in person. Other clients refused to use online resources, either because they were not comfortable using computers or because they had concerns about data security. Clients who require it can receive assistance completing the online application at local employment offices. Clients who prefer to apply using a paper application can request one at local offices.

Respondents in a local employment center and in a community organization that provides application assistance noted that the old access points still exist; clients can still obtain paper applications in local offices. The addition of the online application and client interface only expanded access for clients. As one senior staff member of a partner organization put it, with the new access points, "There's no excuse for someone not to apply." In the 12 months leading to March 2012, more than 70 percent of all applications were submitted online, according to DWS records.

In addition to the online application and client interface, the other primary contact point in place as a result of modernization in Utah is the virtual call center. Unlike the application methods, there is less variation in how clients conduct the eligibility and recertification interviews; they are overwhelmingly conducted through the call center, according to staff interviews. Call volume fluctuated significantly from month to month since DWS transitioned to the statewide virtual call center. Figure V.14 shows average waiting times clients experienced when calling the call center, a

common complaint described in the next subsection. Call wait times appear to be driven in part by call volume.

Figure V.14. Average Call Center Wait Time and Total Inbound Calls, 2009–2011, Utah
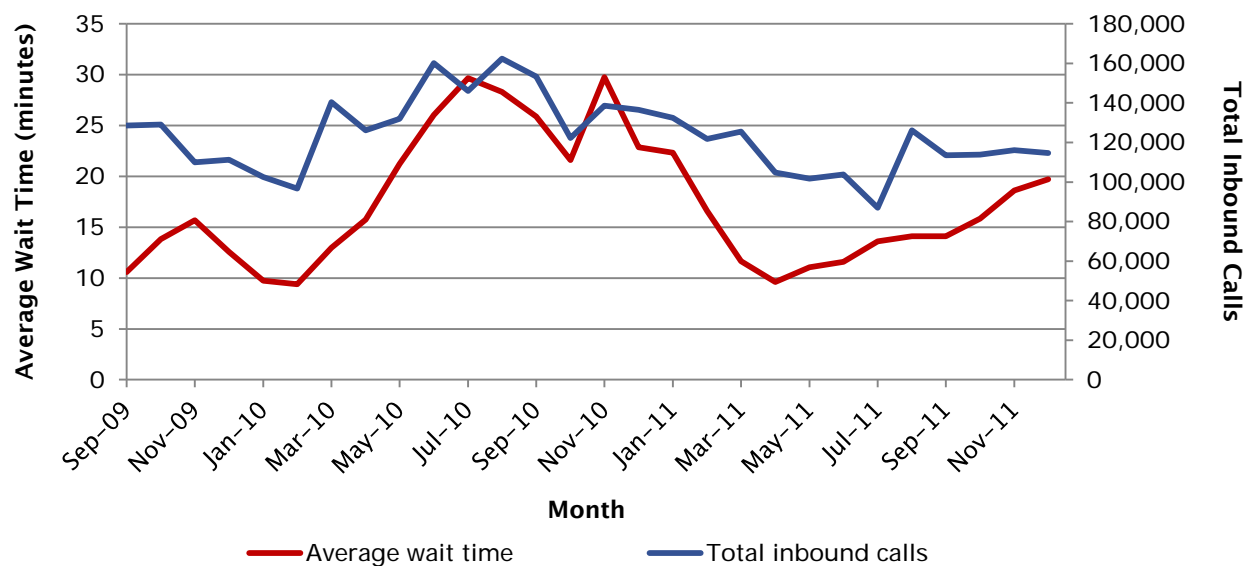
d.   Client Satisfaction

Clients appear to have mixed opinions on the modernization changes in Utah. Many of the changes are highly visible to clients, including the application, eligibility, and interview processes. According to staff interviews, younger clients appreciate having access to the application online. They also appreciate the online chat function, electronic correspondence, and other aspects of the myCase interface. State staff reported very low demand for traditional application processes among younger clients. Younger clients have cell phones and computers and want to conduct as much business as possible online.

There are elements of the changes that many clients do not like. Some clients do not like the online emphasis of the new system. According to various staff interviewed, older clients, Hispanic clients, and others who tend to be less comfortable with computers do not like the changes. The other main complaint many clients have is that they never speak to the same eligibility worker twice. According to staff interviews, many clients want to speak to the eligibility worker who will make their eligibility determination. Staff from a tribal community organization stated that lack of face-to-face interaction does not work well with tribal populations that can be slow to trust strangers.

During focus group sessions, SNAP participants reported that they did not appreciate the long hold times regularly experienced when contacting the call center. Average hold times ranged from 10 to 30 minutes from late 2009 to early 2012 (Figure V.14). Some clients reported being particularly frustrated when they were disconnected after waiting in the queue for a long time. Even if the disconnection was a result of the client's telephone battery running out, it was frustrating to have to restart the wait in the queue. Some respondents acknowledged that the long wait time was a result of the large number of people applying for SNAP. They believed that, if everyone had to go a local office to apply, rather than calling the call center, they would wait even longer for assistance.

2. Payment Error Rates

Utah's payment error rate fell consistently from 2000 to 2004, falling below the national rate in 2001. It remained relatively flat through 2010 and stayed within a percentage point of the national average (Figure V.15).[64] The high error rates at the beginning of the decade resulted in federal sanctions and prompted Utah to create the eFind data verification system, implemented in 2004. Although Utah brought its error rate down before implementing eFind, staff reported that the system improved the accuracy of determinations. Although one senior manager acknowledged that sometimes the databases eFind pulls from are not completely up to date, staff expressed confidence that eFind made their determinations more accurate.

Figure V.15. Trends in SNAP QC Payment Error Rate, 2000–2010, Utah
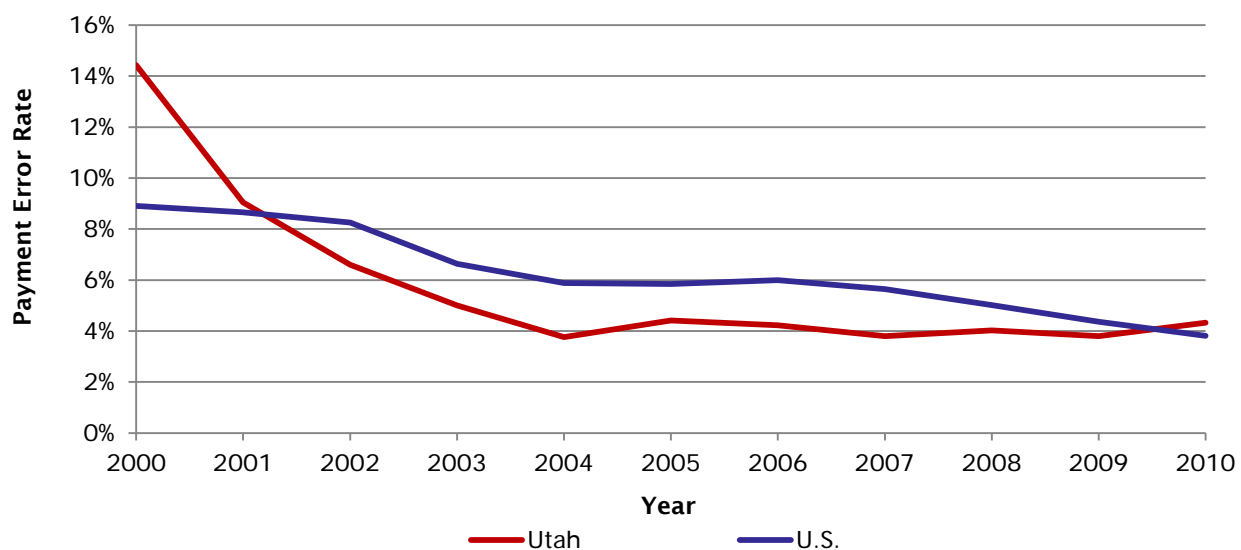
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

The negative error rate showed more variability than the payment error rate in Utah and in the United States as a whole. Utah's negative error rate generally stayed at or below the national rate until 2010, when it notched above the national rate. It is not clear if that is part of an upward trend or a reflection of the greater variability of the negative error rate (see Figure V.16).

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[64] Inaccurate payment amounts must be off by a certain threshold to be considered an error, unless a client is found to be ineligible. The threshold was $50 in FY 2011 and varied in past years.

Figure V.16. Trends in SNAP QC Negative Error Rate, 2000–2010, Utah
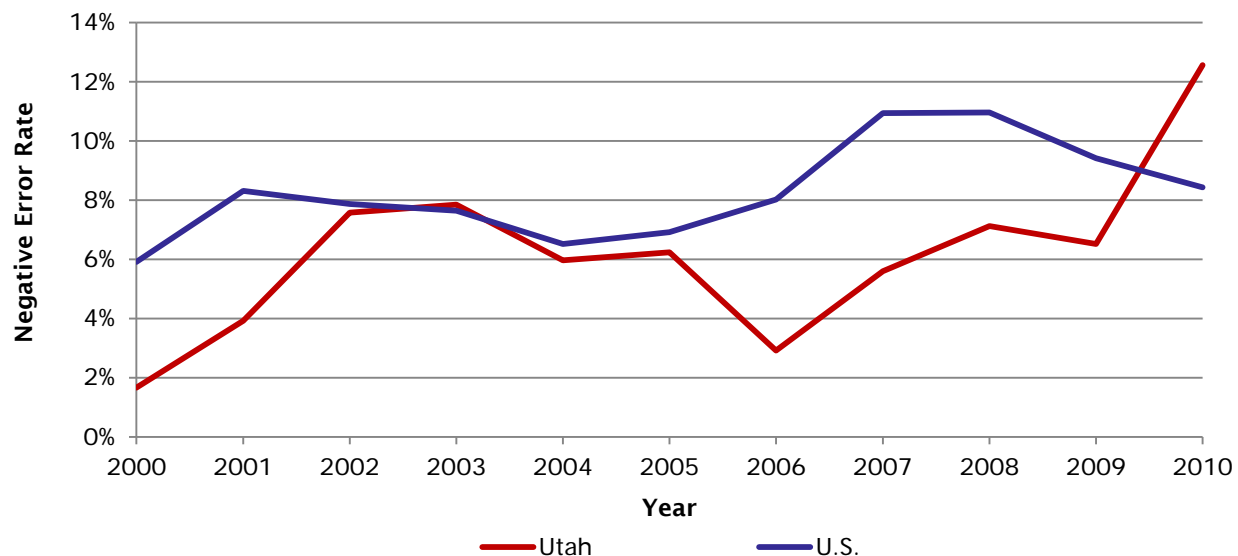
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

DWS has implemented several systems and practices to improve accuracy. Eligibility workers and supervisors reported that the eRep automated eligibility system produces more accurate results because it requires staff to enter more complete case information.

In late 2011 DWS piloted a pay-for-performance program along with real-time case reviews. Both are designed to reduce errors. In early 2012, both programs expanded statewide, though pay-for-performance remained optional for eligibility workers. Under pay-for-performance, workers are paid bonuses in months when they exceed the average number of determinations for their type of eligibility team. Payments are made according to a determination above the average but are given only when the worker meets rigorous accuracy requirements.[65] The program provides a strong incentive for eligibly workers to reduce errors. Supervisors and participating workers reported that the program had improved efficiency and accuracy for workers, though the program was still quite new at the time of the interviews.

DWS implemented real-time case reviews and pay-for-performance to measure the accuracy of participating workers. However, unlike pay-for-performance, real-time case reviews expanded to all eligibility workers. Under this system, each team of eligibility workers has a case reviewer checking a certain portion of the team's determinations. The reviews occur shortly after determinations are completed. One manager reported that the volume of feedback workers receive quadrupled under real-time case reviews. Another senior manager suggested that having workers receive feedback from the same reviewer built trust.

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[65] As of early 2012, the accuracy standards were 90 percent accuracy for positive determinations and 100 percent accuracy for negative determinations.

3. Administrative Costs

Administrative costs have risen over the study period, increasing approximately 43 percent from FY 2000 to FY 2011, according to FNS program data (Figure V.17).[66] Utah's total costs have risen faster than those of the rest of the Mountain Plains Region and the United States as a whole.[67]

Figure V.17. Percentage Change in Total SNAP Administrative Costs from 2000 Baseline, 2000–2011, Utah (2005 dollars)
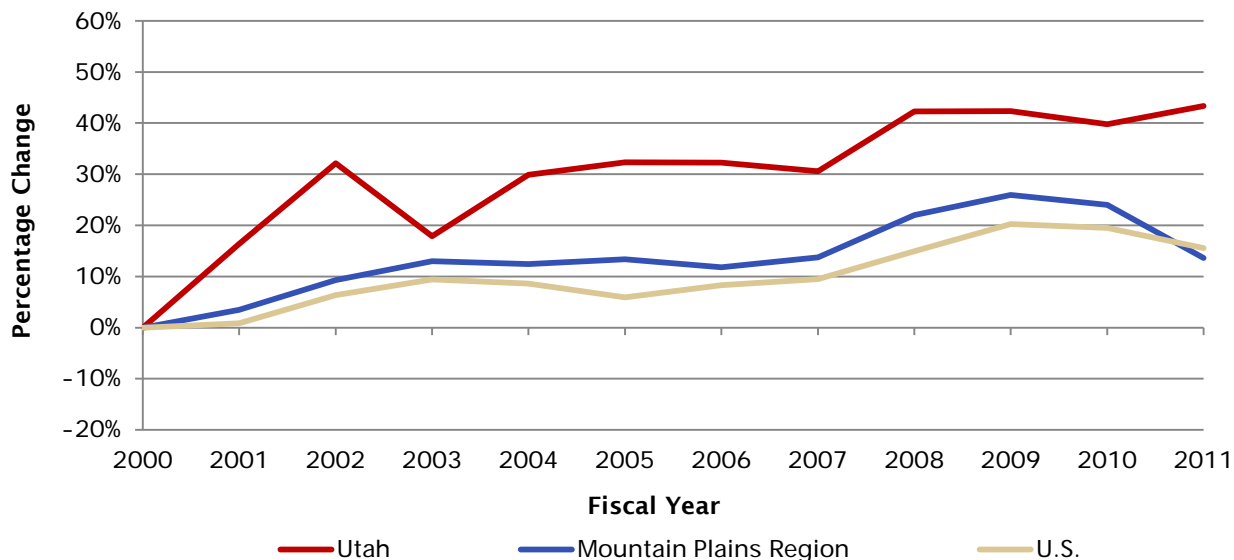
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

However, the cost increase was overshadowed by rising caseloads, which increased 240 percent in Utah during the same period. Utah's total administrative costs per case fell more than 40 percent over the study period, comparable to the change seen in the Mountain Plains Region and the United States as a whole (see Figure V.18). However, cost reductions have been particularly rapid since Utah implemented its most significant administrative and technological modernization changes. Administrative costs per case fell almost 50 percent from 2008 to 2011, compared with 37 percent nationally. Total costs per case in Utah are higher than the national average, about $19 monthly per case in 2011 compared with $13 in all states, likely in part because Utah has a very small caseload compared with most states, so fixed costs are spread over a small pool of cases.

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[66] All costs data are in constant 2005 dollars. All annual costs are presented by federal FY (October 1st through September 31st). When comparing caseload sizes with costs, we present caseloads over the federal FY to make a valid comparison. Therefore, caseload numbers used in calculations in this section might not match figures presented in other sections of the report, which are calendar-year figures.

[67] U.S. costs presented here are the sum of all state administrative costs and do not include federal funds.

Figure V.18. Percentage Change in Average Monthly Costs per Case from 2000 Baseline, 2000–2011, Utah (2005 dollars)
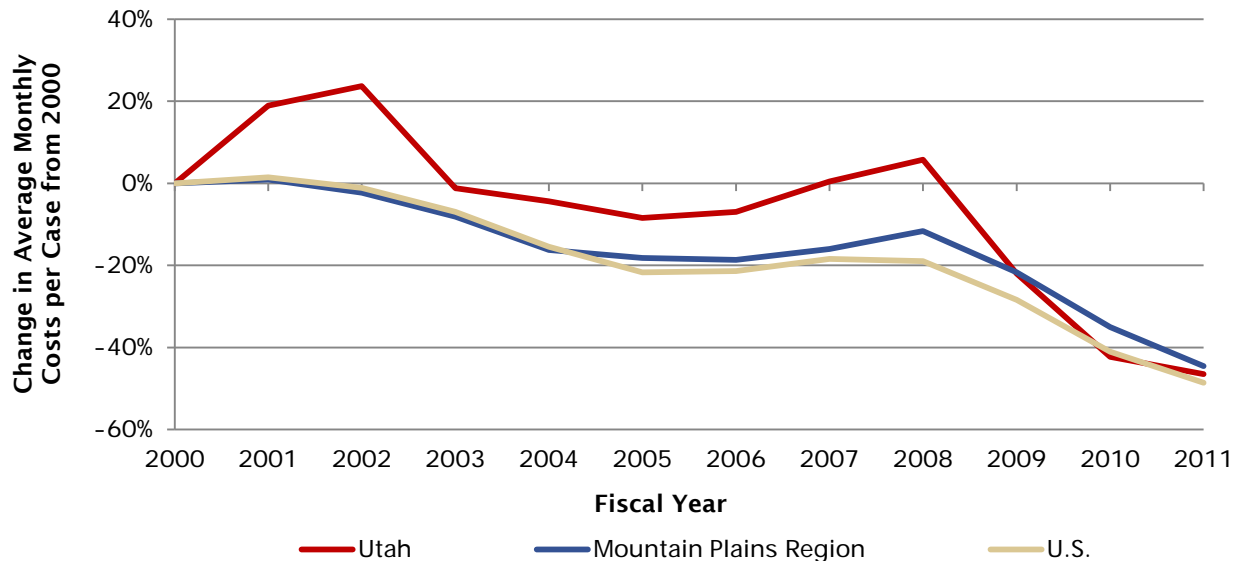
Source: Source: Mathematica tabulations of average monthly costs and average monthly caseloads from the USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

The largest component of Utah's administrative costs is certification, representing about 70 percent of Utah's total administrative costs in every year of the study period. Certification costs have risen slightly faster than total costs, rising almost 50 percent during the study period (Figure V.19).

Figure V.19. Percentage Change in SNAP Certification Costs from 2000 Baseline, 2000–2011, Utah (2005 Dollars)
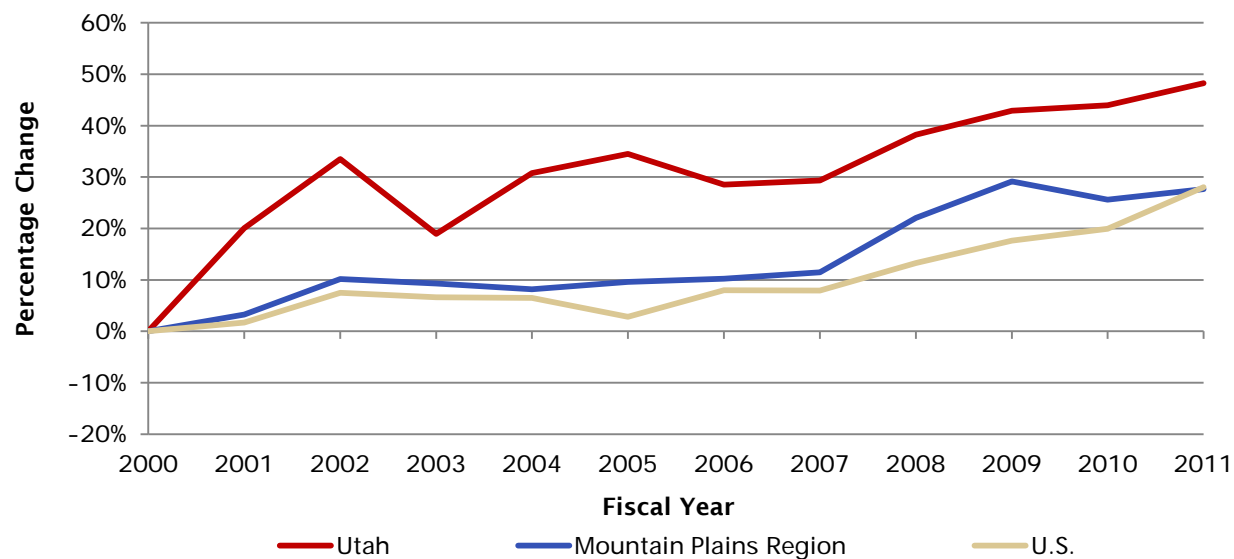
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

By contrast, issuance costs rose and then fell over the study period (Figure V.20). The steady fall beginning in 2009 could be due to the practice of distributing EBT cards by mail throughout the state under the virtual call center model. Local office staff still distribute cards in certain circumstances, but most cards are sent through the mail.

Figure V.20. Percentage Change in SNAP Issuance Costs from 2000 Baseline, 2000–2011, Utah (2005 Dollars)
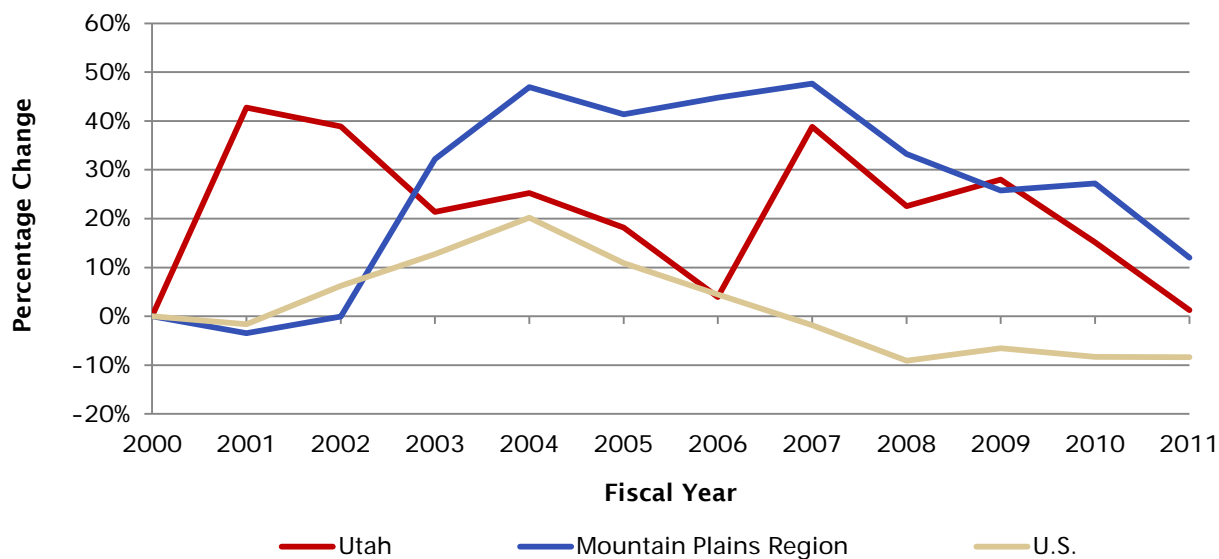
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

Table V.2 presents the allocation of costs by category for FYs 2000 through 2011.

Table V.2. Allocation of Reported State Share of SNAP Administrative Costs, FY 2000–2011, Utah (Percent)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Certification	69.0	71.2	69.7	69.7	69.5	70.1	67.1	68.4	67.1	69.3	71.1	71.4
Issuance	4.3	5.3	4.6	4.5	4.2	3.9	3.4	4.6	3.7	3.9	3.6	3.1
Quality Control	1.9	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.4	2.2	1.7	0.9	1.1
Fraud	3.9	4.7	8.1	7.7	9.3	8.9	9.4	9.0	5.3	5.4	5.7	7.5
ADP Operations	3.2	3.2	3.2	2.0	2.1	2.4	2.1	2.9	8.3	13.6	11.6	10.7
ADP Development	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.2	9.3	7.6	8.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Employment and Training	10.5	11.1	10.3	12.1	10.4	6.6	4.2	2.1	2.5	2.8	4.3	6.2
Outreach	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Miscellaneous	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.1
SNAP Education	3.1	2.0	1.9	1.8	2.0	1.4	2.1	2.7	2.5	3.0	2.7	0.0
Unspecified	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the USDA FNS.

4.   **SNAP Staff**

a.   **Staffing Levels**

The primary method DWS used to cut costs has been staffing reductions achieved through attrition. The state legislature mandated staffing reductions in 2010 amid public discussions of privatizing the department's functions. DWS sought to preempt such a move achieving staffing reductions beyond the level required by the legislature. According to DWS management, the department reduced its staff by 10 percent from November 2010 to October 2011.

DWS reduced the number of eligibility staff by 20 percent from July 2009 to December 2011, even as caseloads in the state increased about 30 percent (Figure V.21). Department managers reported that increased efficiency gained from administrative restructuring and increased automation made the staffing reduction possible. One manager noted that eligibility staff were able to maintain service levels for clients even as staffing levels declined in part due to increased efficiency provided by the Full Kit work prioritization system.

Figure V.21. Eligibility Staffing Levels and Cases per Eligibility Worker, 2009–2011, Utah
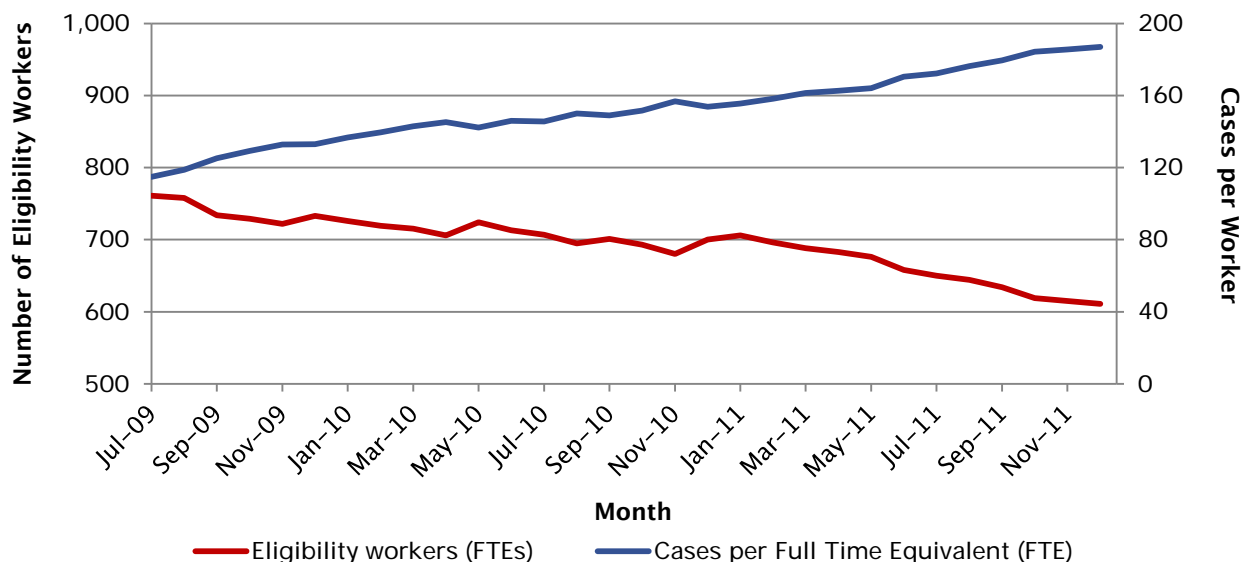
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Utah DWS.

Note: Cases per full-time equivalent (FTE) account only for SNAP cases and do not reflect the other programs processed by eligibility workers in Utah.

b.   **Staff Satisfaction**

DWS staff reported a wide range of reactions to Utah's modernization initiatives. Staff reactions were mixed about some of the new technologies and the call center model. In general, most staff agreed that the changes were necessary to handle caseload increases.

Many eligibility workers reported that eRep and eFind have made them more efficient and accurate. Staff members reported that the upgraded eligibility system, eRep, was a substantial improvement over its predecessor, PACMIS. They said it improved accuracy because it does not allow eligibility workers to take shortcuts; every piece of evidence must be entered. One supervisor remarked that eRep helped her staff think about cases more comprehensively than the previous

system did. Eligibility workers also reported that, especially with the Full Kit work prioritization feature added in 2011, the system enables workers to be more efficient. Staff reported that eRep's Windows-based interface was more intuitive than the legacy code-based PACMIS system. Similarly, eligibility staff reported that the eFind data verification system shortened eligibility interviews substantially. It reduced the number of questions and enabled workers to identify possible fraud more easily.

Some eligibility workers reported that switching to eRep complicated their jobs. Some staff who had used the old system for many years were very comfortable with it and did not enjoy having to learn a new system. This feeling might have been more common in offices with lower staff turnover rates. Some workers also noted that eRep occasionally provided incorrect determinations. They said that the system requires many informal work-around adjustments to function properly. They expressed some frustration that the system did not always function as intended.

Employment center staff we spoke with approved of the online resources available to clients. Staff members who show clients how to use the online application and myCase interface reported that the systems were intuitive and helpful to clients. Employment counselors appreciated the independence web resources give clients. One remarked that she enjoys seeing clients come to the office just to check the case status on the computer without requiring any staff assistance.

Staff reported mixed opinions on the new administrative structure and call center model. Switching to the call center model caused a significant change in the job descriptions for eligibility workers. One call center manager remarked that not all good eligibility workers are good call center operators. Many eligibility workers indicated that they preferred making eligibility determinations to taking client calls. Some staff found client calls stressful, particularly when clients are upset from being on hold for a long time. On the other hand, eligibility workers in the former Central and North regions appreciated the new statewide structure because it evened out caseloads across the state and reduced the increasingly unmanageable workload they experienced before the transition.

Whether staff members liked or disliked the new model, many acknowledged that it was necessary to cope with increased caseloads in the state. As one employment center supervisor put it, "If we had to do business the old way, we would have bankrupted the state."

A common reaction among staff to how the major changes were implemented in Utah was that the changes happened too quickly and too frequently. In particular, eligibility staff complained that transitioning to ESD almost immediately after rolling out the eRep eligibility system was overwhelming to eligibility staff. Senior managers acknowledged this point of view and reported that they had since deliberately slowed the pace of change to reduce staff stress.

C. Lessons Learned

- **Technology can improve worker efficiency.** Increasing use of technology is central to Utah's modernization process. In particular, the increasing level of automation in the eRep eligibility system appears to enable eligibility workers to process applications faster. The eRep system auto-populates select fields from the online application. It also pulls data from some of the 21 federal and state databases linked through the eFind data verification system. These types of technological innovations have allowed a smaller eligibility staff to process increasing numbers of applications with no sustained increase in average processing time.

- **Implementing multiple substantial changes simultaneously can result in high staff stress levels and can affect performance.** Staff from the front lines to executive levels reported that reorganizing the entire department's administrative structure while transitioning to a new automated eligibility system simultaneously caused unnecessarily high levels of stress for staff. The major spike in application processing time in 2010 might have been driven by eligibility staff members trying to adjust to these two changes. Giving staff members time to adjust to one major change before introducing another can reduce staff burden and could be less likely to harm performance.

- **The sequence of changes matters.** DWS leadership attributed much of the success of the changes in Utah to the fact that they were part of a strategically planned sequence. In particular, leadership reported that implementing document imaging and electronic case records was a necessary precursor for transitioning to a call center model and for centralizing eligibility operations.

- **Consistent goals and political support can reinforce long-term strategic planning.** The consistent direction from the Utah state legislature to improve efficiency enabled DWS to make long-range plans. Consistent political support for flexibility in how to reform SNAP administration helped DWS plan its modernization process strategically, putting in place the technologic foundation necessary to implement its long-term vision of a statewide virtual call center.

- **Work-sharing and individual accountability can coexist.** Utah's staffing model enables increased efficiency through work-sharing while preserving individual accountability for accuracy and timeliness. Like many other states, in Utah time-sensitive tasks (such as incoming client calls) are handled by the first available eligibility worker. However, Utah preserved individual caseloads, so that all follow-up and non-time-sensitive work on a case is handled by the eligibility worker who owns the case. Moreover, work-sharing is restricted to staff within teams of 16 or 17 workers, often collocated. This reduces confusion and miscommunication: since team members work together every day, if they have questions on an action taken, they can easily discuss it with the worker who made the change.

VI. CASE STUDY OF MODERNIZATION: WASHINGTON

The economic downturn created conditions that made increasing the efficiency of eligibility operations imperative in Washington: caseloads rose rapidly, substantially increasing the department's workload even as state budget pressures resulted in a staff hiring freeze and office closures and realignment. These conditions both drove the need to further modernize SNAP operations and affected how some modernization initiatives were implemented. (Before the recession, Washington had some modernization initiatives, such as call centers and a version of its online application, already in place.) Washington's Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) shifted to a process-based business model, organizing the eligibility process into smaller tasks that can be shared by workers across the state and moving away from the traditional in-person case worker model. This major reform, termed Service Delivery Redesign (SDR), relied on earlier technological innovations such as centralized document imaging, electronic case records, and a statewide workload management system. Washington augmented these administrative and technological innovations with initiatives designed to increase client access to benefits. The state created a network of community partners to broaden client access and submit benefit applications to DSHS. Washington also implemented policies—such as simplified eligibility reporting requirements and broad-based categorical eligibility—to reduce barriers for clients and burden for staff.

Washington saw improvements in several outcome measures during the course of modernization. One of DSHS's greatest successes was the introduction of same-day service to clients applying for benefits in person. By 2011, 36.5 percent of applications were processed the same day they were submitted. This helped drive an overall reduction in determination times in the state. Faster customer service also led to improved client satisfaction, according to participants in the study's focus group and perceptions of local office staff. Washington achieved a reduction in costs during modernization: average monthly costs per case fell from $28.81 in 2000 to $6.97 in 2011. These improved outcomes are offset by widespread reports of increased staff stress in recent years. However, it is not clear if increased stress stems from Washington's modernization changes or the vast increases in the state's caseload coinciding with hiring freezes and staffing reductions.

This chapter provides a detailed description of modernization efforts in Washington, including the context for the changes and how the new procedures have affected clients' experiences. Next, it lays out some outcomes related to the FNS goals of access, accuracy, and satisfaction. The chapter closes with a discussion of lessons learned from Washington's experience.

A. Description of Modernization Initiatives

DSHS pursued significant changes in all four modernization categories: administrative restructuring, technological changes, expanded use of community partners, and policy simplification. This section describes the initiatives in these categories in detail, beginning with the most comprehensive changes, the thorough reorganization of DSHS's administrative structure along with the technological innovations that support it, based on information from extant data and visits to several locations in the state (Figure VI.1). It also presents Washington's innovative community partnership model and the policy modifications designed to expand access and streamline eligibility.

Figure VI.1. Sites Visited in Washington and Other Notable Cities
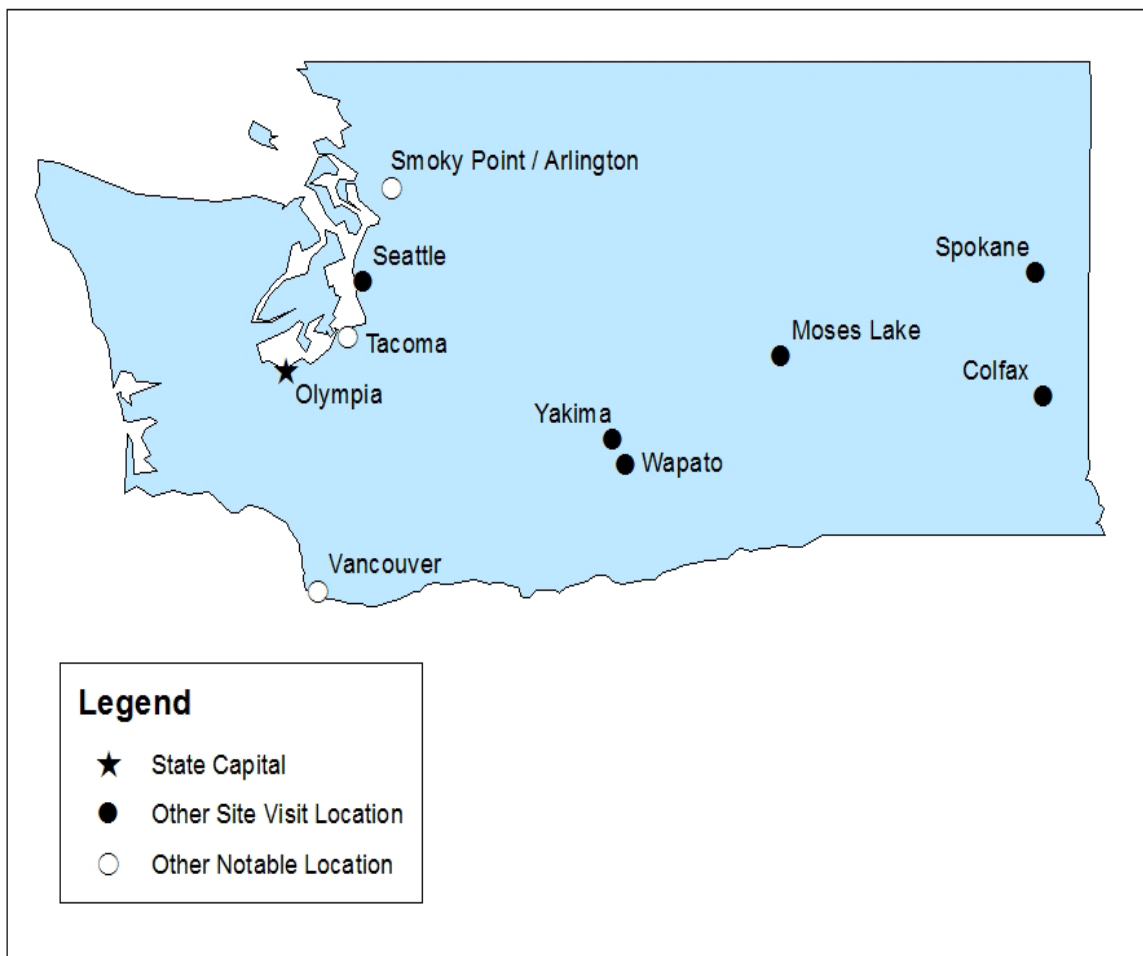
Note: Smoky Point/Arlington, Tacoma, and Vancouver are the sites of DHS document imaging hubs, but were not visited for the study.

1.   Approach to Modernization

Three primary goals motivated DSHS's modernization process. The first was to reform the state's eligibility operations to prepare for the expected influx of cases following the economic downturn in 2008. That year, department leadership believed caseloads, which had doubled from 2000 to 2007, would double again by 2011 (and this prediction came true) (Figure VI.2). With no funding available to increase staffing, the department initiated a process of developing a more efficient model for eligibility operations.

Figure VI.2. Number of Cases per Month, 2000- 2011, Washington
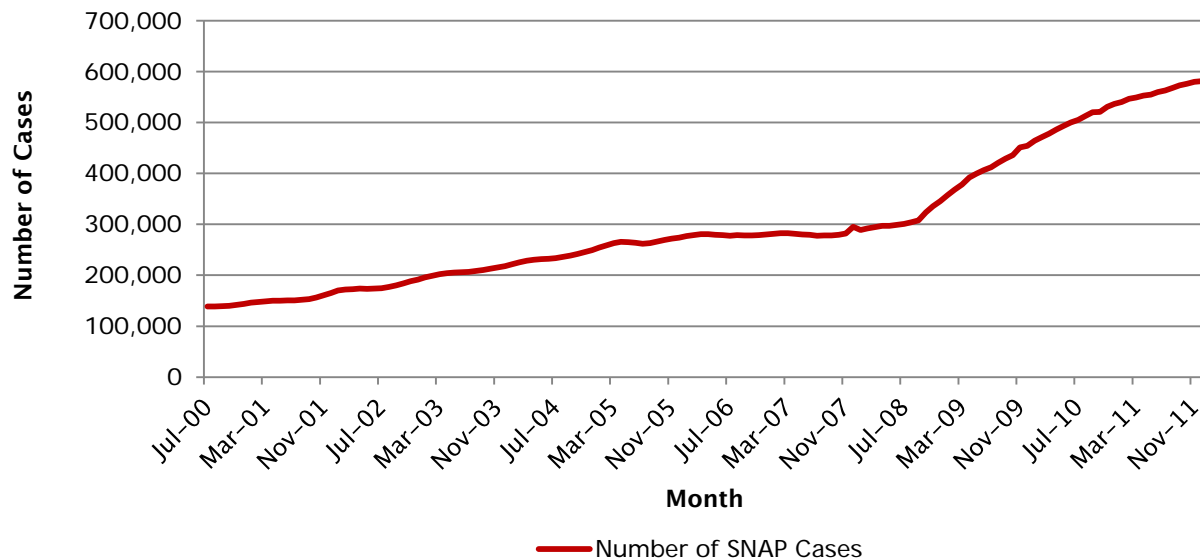
Washington's second modernization goal was to decrease eligibility determination times and improve customer service and reduce costs. The major change implemented to address timeliness was the introduction of same-day service.

Washington's third goal in modernizing its eligibility operations was to standardize operations across the state for both staff and clients. This standardization had three components: standardize service levels for clients, standardize the look and feel of local offices around the state, and equalize the workloads of staff. When doing this, Washington modified its regional administrative structure from six regions to three to further save on administrative costs. According to a regional administrator, the regional consolidation has also helped DSHS capitalize on building consistency, control, and capacity on a statewide level.

A fundamental element of Washington's modernization process was the SDR, which moved the administrative structure from a caseload-based eligibility model (with specific staff assigned to all processes on specific cases) to a process-based model. This transition was intended to increase staff efficiency. Under a process-based model, staff work on portions of cases as they become available for processing. In order to implement a process-based model, DSHS standardized its eligibility procedures across the state. The department adopted new technology to enable the portability of work, so that eligibility workers in all areas of the state could share workloads. Department managers set work priorities by using daily "missions," identified by analyzing operational data, that guide the efforts of eligibility staff. Missions—which are state-specific tasks that require staff focus for a day, a week or longer—can be set at local, regional, or state levels, and shape the results of an algorithm that prioritizes the next work to be assigned to staff through their work queues. For example, if managers observed that a particular backlog of recertifications was coming due across the state (or within a specific region), then they could create a mission so that those types of cases would come to the top of worker queues as staff completed their work throughout the day. Managers noted that the use of missions can help offices or regions that face localized emergencies, enabling staff in these locations to focus on assisting clients in those areas while the mission-driven queue reassigns other work to staff in other locations.

Members of staff at all levels of state government contributed to the planning process for developing SDR. A senior manager reported that the successful development of the model was possible only because leadership at all levels, from the state governor, to the department director, to the regional managers, supported the process. The department convened planning teams that included supervisors and frontline staff from different parts of the state. Washington also contracted with Change and Innovations, a private consulting firm, to help develop the new model. The consultants guided and supported state staff through brainstorming meetings to identify inefficiencies and reshape processes, and assisted staff with documenting and communicating new procedures with staff as they rolled out SDR.

2. Summary of Changes, by Category

a. Restructuring of Administrative Functions

The efforts in Washington to modify its administrative structure focused on maximizing efficiencies in processing cases in anticipation of the dramatic increase in cases brought on by the economic downturn through such initiatives as moving staff to a process-based model under SDR and establishing a statewide call center (Figure VI.3).

Figure VI.3. Summary of Changes to Administrative Functions, Washington

Description of Activity	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Call Center										▓	▓	▓
Accept and process changes submitted by callers										▓	▓	▓
Provide general information and referrals										▓	▓	▓
Conduct initial interviews										▓	▓	▓
Conduct recertification interviews										▓	▓	▓
Process faxes										▓	▓	▓
Eligibility reviews										▓	▓	▓
IVR system										▓	▓	▓
Automated 24-Hour "Answer Phone" Information System		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓			
Mobile Offices										▓	▓	▓
Specialization and/or Centralization of Staff for:												
Reallocate more workers to front line									▓	▓	▓	▓
SDR									░	▓	▓	▓
Process-based model										▓	▓	▓
Narration Templates									░	░	░	░

Source: Information reported to Mathematica by the Washington DSHS.

░ Modernization in pilot phase or limited implementation.

▓ Modernization is implemented statewide.

Service Delivery Redesign. SDR, which was implemented in 2010, standardized eligibility operations across the state, prescribing specific practices such as staffing assignments and work tempos to local offices. For example, all local office lobbies adopted a standard layout with a consistent look and feel, to standardize the client experience. Additionally, eligibility workers in local

offices were organized into specialized roles. Each office has one or two navigators who greet clients as they enter and help them check in using lobby automated queuing systems. The remaining eligibility workers are organized into three teams;[68] (1) the green team processes SNAP, medical, aged, blind, and disabled medical program applications; (2) the red team processes TANF, Additional Requirements for Emergent Needs (AREN), and Diversion Cash Assistance (DCA) applications; and (3) the blue team conducts all eligibility reviews. Eligibility workers rotate periodically among the teams, so that all workers spend time performing each function.

The tasks these teams perform come from two sources: clients entering the local office and statewide task queues. For instance, green team members process applications and conduct interviews for clients applying in person in their local office. They also pull applications from the statewide queue and conduct telephone interviews for clients who call the statewide call center to request one. Blue team members conduct eligibility reviews for clients who walk into the lobby. At the time of this report, clients contacting the call center wanting to conduct an eligibility review by telephone might be sent to their local office's blue team queue for a return call within two hours, depending on the region.[69] For mid-certification reviews, clients appearing at the local office to participate in the review in person will be handled by one of the three lobby teams (green, red, or blue). Work pulled from the statewide queue is generated by clients submitting documents, information, and applications through the mail, fax, online, or through the call center. The statewide queue and other workflow mechanisms are explained in greater detail in the technology section of this chapter.

Workers do as much as they can to process a case before passing it to another worker to continue. For example, eligibility workers in local offices assist clients in person or over the telephone. In these interactions, the eligibility worker will process a case as far as possible. If the necessary verification document is available to complete the determination during the first contact with the client, the eligibility worker will do so. If not, the eligibility worker will "pend" the case, sending it to the backlog queue. Eligibility workers working the backlog queues will be assigned the oldest task awaiting action in the queue. A case is ready for additional action if a client has submitted a piece of verification documentation. Again, an eligibility worker will work the case as far as possible with the new available documentation and pend it again if a final determination is still not possible. In this way, eligibility workers often work small portions of cases and do not generally see the same case twice.

Offices operate on a standard workday routine, in which customers may enter until 2:00 p.m.[70] After that time, staff finish assisting the clients who are waiting for an interview, and then they switch to working on backlog casework and continuing to assist other clients waiting in the lobby

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[68] Local offices can include additional teams to perform such tasks as processing applications that have been pended, processing changes and addressing questions, or addressing questions from TANF clients. The number of teams varies by office.

[69] Beginning in mid-September 2012, clients contacting the call center for an eligibility review will be routed to the Region 1 centralized eligibility review team.

[70] Clients can enter the lobby at any time during standard business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00p.m. However, offices impose a 2:00 p.m. cut-off time for clients requiring interviews to allow clients who have checked in by 2:00 p.m. to be seen by the close of business. Clients may enter the local office between 2:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. to perform other activities, such as filling out applications, dropping off documents, or asking questions.

that do not require an interview. Backlogged work can be assigned from the local office pool, from the region, or from the state queues.

Local offices are allowed some discretion in how they implement procedures under SDR. For example, some local offices have chosen to assign one or two eligibility workers to backlog work each day, rather than the standard procedure of having all staff switch to working backlog queues beginning at 2:00 p.m. Other offices have made minor alterations to the prescribed lobby arrangement. This appeared most common in smaller offices, which found it useful to have one staff member filling two roles. For instance, in an office with little foot traffic, the eligibility staff lead worker might double as the navigator who greets customers coming through the door while simultaneously supervising staff work. Finally, two of the local offices we visited operated virtual lobbies that each coordinated work with another office. These virtual lobbies combined their client queues from two offices into one queue served by staff from both offices. In these cases, clients receiving an interview in a local office might be doing so over the telephone with a staff member from a neighboring office.

SDR is designed to enable DSHS to meet one of its primary modernization goals, completing eligibility determinations rapidly. Under SDR, clients no longer make appointments for interviews. Interviews are conducted during the first contact staff have with clients, when possible. Clients entering a local office before the 2:00 deadline can receive their interview the same day. Clients contacting the call center to request an interview put their name in a queue and will receive a call back from their local office to conduct a telephone interview within two hours. Some clients receive same-day service under SDR. Clients who bring all necessary verification documents with them to a local office before 2:00 can complete the entire application process and EBT card with benefits, if found eligible, by 5:00 p.m.

Centralized eligibility reviews. Following the implementation of SDR, Washington shifted the responsibility for conducting most recertification eligibility reviews to centralized teams, one in each of the state's three regions. These teams conduct the eligibility reviews for clients who submit the recertification form online or by mail or fax. The centralized eligibility review teams also handle some of the eligibility reviews conducted by telephone, depending on the region. When a client contacts the call center to request an interview, the eligibility review team calls the client back to conduct the interview within two hours.[71] One manager reported that most return calls occur within 15 minutes. Beginning in mid-September 2012, clients contacting the call center about their recertification eligibility review will have their call routed directly to the recently expanded Region 1 eligibility review team, which will handle the statewide recertification interviews by telephone. State staff reported that the centralized eligibility review process appears to generate efficiencies and the faster call-back times, which prompted the transition to handling telephone recertification interviews via a centralized team in Region 1. Members of the centralized eligibility review teams also work on tasks in the statewide backlog pools, along with all other eligibility workers in Washington.

Statewide virtual call center. As part of DSHS's modernization goals to provide standard service and equalize the workload of staff, the agency centralized its call center during SDR reform in 2010, consolidating 41 local and regional call centers into one statewide virtual call center. Call

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[71] At the time of this report, depending on the region, some local office eligibility workers completed this task.

center staff are located in a physical call center in Yakima and in local offices around the state; they report to a single statewide administrator.

The call center was initially intended to handle telephone interviews, change reporting by telephone, and all backlog work in the statewide pool. Eligibility staff were drawn from local offices around the state to staff the virtual call center for this purpose.[72] However, this initial vision proved unrealistic as the call center's staffing levels were insufficient to accommodate the rapid caseload increase. As a result, the call center's functions have been scaled back.

As of early 2012, the call center processed changes and answered client questions. Although call center staff conducted some eligibility interviews, most eligibility interviews were conducted by local office staff and members of the centralized eligibility review teams. In these cases, call center staff entered clients into a queue to receive a call-back within two hours. Call center staff also worked the statewide backlog pool, though this responsibility is shared with eligibility workers in all local offices as well as the document imaging units.

Since May 2011, call center agents have been organized into three specialized teams: (1) the triage team determines a caller's needs and routes the call appropriately, (2) the program-specific team processes changes,[73] and (3) the batch team processes backlog work. The teams rotate across the different functions during the day. For example, a call agent might spend the morning processing changes to SNAP cases and the afternoon processing backlogged work from the statewide backlog work pool. Before 2011, there was no triage team to do a preliminary screening of the purpose of the call and all calls waited in a single statewide queue.

Clients use a single toll-free number to reach the virtual call center. When a client connects to the call center, an automated menu provides options for the caller to choose the purpose of his or her call and also prompts the caller to enter a client ID. Then the call is directed to a triage call agent, who will elicit further details about the purpose of the client's call. Using Avaya client software, the caller-entered client ID is shown on the triage call agent's screen, allowing her to pull up the client's record from the eligibility system on her computer quickly, often before the call is transferred to her telephone line. If all triage call agents are busy, the call might wait in a primary queue before the caller is connected to an agent.

When the triage call agent speaks to the client to determine the reason for the call, the agent will handle the call if the request is straightforward, such as a small change or a simple question about the program. If not, he or she will forward the call to the appropriate program-specific team to handle. At that point, the call will enter a secondary queue until the next available call agent can take it. If the secondary queue is at maximum capacity, the triage call agent can use the workload management system, document management system (DMS)/Barcode, to have an eligibility worker from a local office call the client back.

Senior department leadership reported that the development and operations of the virtual call center might have suffered from a lack of attention from upper management. The development of

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[72] Many staff reassignments were administrative only. That is, many call center staff still physically work in the local offices, but they report to the call center.

[73] In addition to SNAP, the virtual call center serves TANF, Medicaid, and the child care subsidy program clients.

the call center coincided with the deployment of SDR in the local offices across the state, and DSHS leaders focused more on getting SDR implemented successfully than on the call center. Managers from the local and regional call centers that had been consolidated into the virtual call center were responsible for developing its procedures and were forced to scale back the call center's mission as it became clear that the call center's responsibilities exceeded the capacity of the staff assigned to it. As of early 2012, DSHS leadership has placed a renewed focus on call center operations and procedures. They have identified acquiring a robust quality management tool for monitoring customer service and worker productivity as a top department priority.

b.   Expanding Uses of Technology

Washington's use of technology focused on supporting two main priorities: (1) the portability of work across the state and (2) expanding client access (Figure VI.4).

Figure VI.4. Summary of Expanded Technology Applications, Washington

Description of Activity	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Online Screening Tool												▓	▓
Online Application			░	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Online Account Functionality									░	░	▓	▓	▓
Recertify online												▓	▓
Online change reporting												▓	▓
Electronic correspondence												▓	▓
Benefit status												▓	▓
Benefit history												▓	▓
Document Imaging			░	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Electronic Case Files			░	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Self-Service Interview Scheduling										░	░	▓	▓
Automated Request Process for EBT Recoveries, Replacements, Credits											▓	▓	▓
Wireless Point-of-Sale for EBT Card Use at Farmers' Markets											▓	▓	▓
Staff Technological Modernization													
Policy update training tool												▓	▓
Operational dashboard											▓	▓	▓

Source: Information reported to Mathematica by the Washington DSHS.

Note: DSHS implemented a new online system, Washington Connection, in January 2011.

░ Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.

▓ Initiative in statewide implementation.

Sharing work statewide has provided additional flexibility and less disruption of service, especially during natural disasters and other local emergencies. To allow work-sharing across the state, DSHS implemented document imaging and the DMS, also called Barcode. DMS/Barcode is the state's electronic case record and workload management system.

Initiatives designed to expand client access have assisted DSHS with reaching more people, especially those located in remote rural areas in the central and eastern parts of the state. To increase program access, DSHS's online system, Washington Connection, contains modules that enable

clients to perform a variety of functions from any computer with internet access; its mobile offices travel to remote locations to improve client access.

Document imaging. DSHS implemented document imaging as a pilot in four local offices in one region in 2001,[74] and then expanded the effort statewide in 2003. Washington has three document imaging units,[75] known as hub imaging units (HIUs) in the state, although DSHS plans to consolidate to two units. The statewide monthly mail volume for the document imaging units was about 382,000 documents as of February 2012. Imaged documents are stored locally on the units' local servers and are later moved to a shared network location. According to a senior manager, DSHS is investigating the possibility of having documents directly connected and stored on a network server, eliminating the intermediary local storage step.

Imaging units receive documents from local offices or directly from clients by mail or by fax.[76] The document imaging units receive two main types of documents to be imaged. Hot mail includes hard-copy and faxed documents not yet processed by an eligibility worker. Hot mail must be sorted, scanned, indexed, and attached to a client's case file within 24 hours of receipt.[77] Hot mail documents also have an assignment associated with them in the workload management system, creating a task for an eligibility worker to process them. Cold mail includes hard-copy documents that an eligibility worker in a local office has already processed and need only to be imaged for the client's file. Imaging staff have five business days to sort, image, index, and attach cold mail to client case records. One unit administrator identified the timeliness deadlines for imaging documents as the number one priority for the imaging units.

Document imaging unit workers are organized into two teams and rotate functions weekly. The two main functions of document imaging unit workers are to (1) sort, image, index, and attach documents; and (2) process backlogged work from the statewide work pool.[78] When the document imaging unit receives documents, they are first sorted. When opening and sorting the mail, a worker places a sheet with a barcode between each packet of documents if multiple documents for one case file are received at once, and another barcode sheet is placed between each document. The worker then uses a scanner to image the documents. Next, workers index the documents, assigning each a specific document type such as an application or a verification document. Finally, the document is assigned to a client's file.

Workload management. Having a client's case file available electronically from any local office or specialized unit, such as the call center or document imaging unit, is essential for work portability, and the state's workload management system is also critical in coordinating statewide work-sharing. DMS/Barcode was developed to serve both of these functions. First, the system

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[74] The local office in Moses Lake piloted a decentralized model; local offices in Port Angeles, Port Townsend, and Forks piloted a centralized model.

[75] The five document imaging units are located in Yakima, Tacoma, Smoky Point (Arlington), Olympia, and Vancouver. Yakima and Tacoma are the two largest units.

[76] The Tacoma document imaging unit receives hard-copy documents via mail only and does not receive faxed documents.

[77] Faxed documents arrive electronically and do not have to be sorted and scanned, only indexed and attached.

[78] All document imaging unit workers are eligibility workers, and so are qualified to process changes and make eligibility determinations in the backlog pool.

houses imaged documents. Second, it contains workload management tools with functionality to assign work and to monitor worker productivity.

DMS/Barcode was developed by DSHS information technology staff in 2001. The department developed the system in-house rather than using a private contractor, believing that changes to schedules or system requirements would be less likely to result in increased costs with in-house staff than with a contractor. In addition, upgrades or system changes after the initial launch of the system could be implemented more quickly and less expensively by in-house staff. DMS/Barcode has had mechanisms to assign work since its initial deployment, although these functions have evolved over time, especially following the implementation of SDR. Under SDR, work assignments in DMS/Barcode are team-based and tasks are assigned in the order received. Workers cannot select only the tasks they want. Electronic case records in DMS/Barcode store client information from two sources: imaged documents and electronic data imported from the online application.

DMS/Barcode tasks can be generated automatically, as when a client checks in at the local office using the lobby automated queuing systems, or manually, for instance when a call center agent enters a client into the queue to receive a call-back for an eligibility interview. DMS/Barcode categorizes tasks into three main groups:

1. **Assisting clients waiting in a local office lobby.** These tasks are contained in queues maintained in each local office. The queues are sorted according to the purpose of the clients' visits (for instance, initial application, reporting a change, or requesting a replacement EBT card). This determines which team of eligibility workers will handle each task. Tasks within each category are addressed in chronological order. The task queues enable local office supervisors and managers to track eligibility worker performance by timing each case in the queue from the time it is assigned to a worker to the time the worker selects her next case.

2. **Completing high-priority follow-up tasks, such as calling a client waiting for a telephone interview.** These tasks are created when the original eligibility worker is not able to handle the request. The worker can create a "tickler" in the system, which alerts staff who can handle the request that the task is pending. The most common example of this is when a call agent enters a client into the queue to receive a call-back eligibility interview from local staff or members of the regional centralized review team. Ticklers are reserved for tasks requiring same-day action. For example, call backs for interviews are supposed to occur within two hours.

3. **Completing lower-priority backlogged case work.** These tasks are routed to statewide backlog pools on which eligibility workers in all locations spend a portion of their time working. When backlog work volume is high, workers from any local office or specialized unit may switch to working the backlog pool on an ad hoc basis. Similar to the queues, batch pool work can also be tracked and timed based on when a worker is assigned a task and then moves on to the next task.

The workload management tools of DMS/Barcode are used to share these three task groups across the state. Missions define the priorities and are set by managers at the state, region, or local office levels. These priorities can change at any time to adjust to the current work flow.

Online interface. To support the expansion of client access, DSHS developed the state's online system, Washington Connection, which houses an eligibility screening tool, online application, and secure client accounts. The eligibility screening tool, available since April 2011,

enables the user to answer a series of questions to determine potential eligibility for SNAP and other programs. After the user has answered all of the screening tool questions, it provides him with information on which programs he might be eligible for and a checklist for him to select which program(s) he would like to apply for, and a link to the online application. The client can opt to have the screening tool automatically populate the application with the information the client entered to avoid duplicating data entry.

The online application, first implemented in 2001, is a combined application for SNAP; TANF; general, medical, and child care assistance; and other local programs, such as municipal programs in Seattle. It is available from any computer with an Internet connection, and all local office lobbies are equipped with computers with access to the online application. The application is linked to the state's eligibility system and DMS/Barcode. Select fields from the online application populate the eligibility system and the client's electronic case record in DMS/Barcode.

In October 2011, DSHS implemented secure client accounts in Washington Connection to allow clients to check their application status, benefit history and amount, report changes, and recertify online. Previously, clients would have had to walk into a local office or contact the call center to perform these functions.

Mobile offices. In June 2010, through a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and USDA, DSHS obtained two fully functioning mobile community service offices (CSOs). The mobile CSOs were implemented to reach remote communities whose clients cannot easily reach a brick-and-mortar office. One of the mobile CSOs provides services in the eastern side of Washington, the other serves the western side of the state. The mobile CSOs work on a rotating schedule, traveling to communities that do not have permanent local offices. The mobile CSOs also fill in for local offices in the event of natural disasters or other temporary office closures. This added flexibility has helped DSHS to lessen service disruptions in the event of an emergency.

Modernization in Washington from the Client's Perspective

Administrative structure and business processes reforms in Washington have had a substantial impact on the way clients apply for and interact with SNAP. Staff structure in the state has moved from the traditional in-person caseworker model to a process-based model, and has added centralized, specialized units to handle calls and process documents. Clients do not work with one assigned caseworker, but instead interact with the next available caseworker (a person who could be different each time the client interacts with SNAP). In addition, clients can complete all necessary actions related to their application and case without having to appear in person.

Application. Before applying for SNAP, potential clients can use an online screening tool, available through Washington Connection, to see whether they are likely to be eligible for benefits. Clients can apply for SNAP online or on paper. When applying online, clients can use any computer with Internet access, including a home or public computer (for example, in a library), or a self-service computer in any local office. Clients can also complete and submit paper applications at local offices. Paper applications are available for clients in local offices and at community partner organizations, or via download from the agency website, where it is available in 13 languages.

Certification. After applying, clients receive a mailed notice instructing them to complete an eligibility interview. The notice does not contain a specific appointment time; it simply gives a deadline indicating when the interview must be completed. If choosing to interview by telephone, clients contact the call center, are placed into a telephone interview queue, and receive a call from an eligibility worker within two hours. The eligibility worker conducting the interview could be from the client's local office or from elsewhere in the region or state. A client wishing to interview in person visits a local office and must enter the local office lobby by 2:00 p.m. to be interviewed by 5:00 p.m. the same day. If an eligible client has also brought all the necessary verification documents, he or she might have an EBT card issued and credited with benefits before leaving the office.

Clients can send verification documents through mail, fax, or local office drop-off; the documents must be submitted before eligibility determination. When a client is approved, he or she will receive EBT cards through the mail (unless the client received one in person).

Recertification. Clients can recertify by telephone or in person. If by telephone, clients contact the call center, where they enter the recertification telephone interview queue and are called back within two hours by an eligibility worker either from a centralized regional recertification teams that conducts the recertification interview and makes a determination or from a local office. Clients who prefer to handle their recertification in person can go to a local office, where the next available eligibility worker will conduct the interview and make the determination.

Case maintenance. To check the status of their cases and view benefit information, clients can access their information via Washington Connection. To report changes or to ask general questions about their case and its status, clients can contact the call center to speak with a trained eligibility worker.

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c. Partnering with Community Organizations

Despite performing some overlapping functions, DSHS recognizes two different types of community partner organizations: outreach partners, who are compensated, and community partners, who are not. A separate state administrator oversees each category of partners. Since 2002, a large network of community partners has operated in Washington, with more than 600 partners statewide as of September 2012, 9 primary outreach partners, and 56 regional and local outreach partner subcontractors submitted for FNS approval for FY 2013 (Figure VI.5).

Figure VI.5. Summary of Partnerships with Community Organizations, Washington

Description of Activity	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Online Application Submission Assistance									▓	▓	▓	▓
Outreach to Low-Income Households				▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Transition from reimbursement model to pay-for-performance model								▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Equipment Purchasing Grant for Outreach Partners									░	░	░	░
Revision of Online Application					▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
State Nutrition Action Plan				▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Formal contracts or MOUs				▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
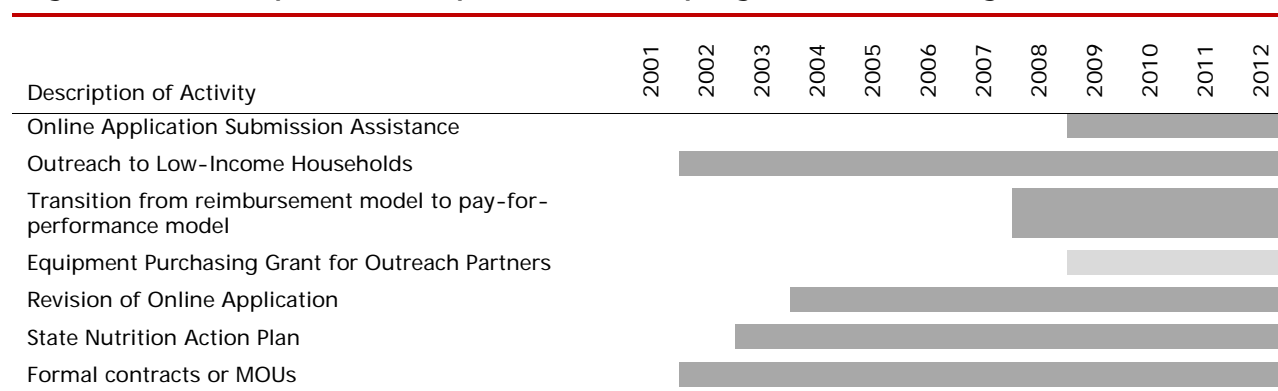
Source: Information reported to Mathematica by the Washington DSHS.

░ Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.

▓ Initiative in statewide implementation.

Both outreach and community partners conduct application assistance. However, outreach partners must perform this function because it is the basis of their compensation. Outreach partners either contract directly with DSHS or operate as subcontractors to a lead outreach partner (Table VI.1). The outreach partner reimbursement program in Washington has been used as a model for other states, including Massachusetts.[79]

Table VI.1. Community Partner Functions and Characteristics by Partner Type, Washington

Function/Characteristic	Outreach Partner	Level 1 Community Partner – Hosting Organization	Level 2 Community Partner – Assisting Agency[a]
General Outreach	X	X	X
Application Assistance	X		X
Contract with Agency[b]	X		
Data Sharing Agreement	X		X
Nondisclosure Agreement	X		X
Compensated by State	X		
Performance Tracked by State	X		X

Source: Information reported to Mathematica by the Washington DSHS

[a] The community partner levels are explained in the main text.

[b] Outreach partners who are subcontractors can hold contracts with lead outreach partners who in turn hold contracts with the agency.

Compensation for outreach partnerships in Washington evolved from a cost reimbursement model to a performance-based model. Outreach partner arrangements began in 2002 with reimbursement for half of allowable costs for SNAP outreach and application activities. In 2008, the outreach partner arrangements transitioned to a performance-based model with the contracts

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[79] Massachusetts did not ultimately implement a performance-based community partner compensation structure, although the state does reimburse its partners.

identifying specific payment points, including reimbursement for brief encounters, group presentations, telephone outreach, and applications with a name and date of birth.[80] In 2009 the agency again revised its compensation structure with the following performance measures for compensation: (1) completed applications submitted, (2) applications approved, (3) online applications submitted, (4) and maintaining an approval rate greater than 60 percent. For each of these performance points, the outreach partner is paid a fee. Of this fee, the state agency pays half and federal funding matches the other half. Outreach partners are paid $160 for completed applications and an additional $100 for approved applications. The state added two incentive bonuses in 2010: (1) partners receive an additional $10 per online application and (2) partners with a monthly approval rate of at least 60 percent receive an additional $5 per application.[81]

The process for tracking performance to determine compensation for the outreach partners has developed from a manual process to a mostly automated process with some manual oversight. When outreach partnerships began in 2002, the outreach partners would submit paper applications affixed with a barcode sticker to track the number of applications they were submitting. In 2009, with the change to the outreach partner reimbursement structure and the deployment of a new online application website, outreach partners logged into the online application website with a Washington Connection ID, a code that associated their organization with the application. To reconcile compensation at the end of the month, the state outreach partner administrator runs a query from the DMS/Barcode workload management system to determine how many applications the outreach partner submitted and approved, its approval rate for the month, and the source of the applications it submitted (paper or online). The report created from the DMS/Barcode query is sent to the outreach partner to check against its records, and if necessary, some back and forth may occur to resolve any discrepancies. Finally, the reconciled DMS/Barcode report is compared with data from the eligibility system to calculate the final reimbursement amounts for each partner.

Both state staff and outreach partners indicated that improved communication and access for outreach partners could improve their coordination. At the time of our visit in October 2011, state staff had suggested the possibility of granting outreach partners more access to client information, such as application status. The agency would then be able to rely upon partners more heavily to follow up directly with clients. Outreach partner staff we spoke to expressed interest in more client information-sharing. They also reported that the line of communication with DSHS was more direct before SDR. At that time, outreach partners could communicate directly with eligibility workers in local offices; now they must call the statewide call center.

Community partners (as opposed to outreach partners) are not paid for outreach and application assistance activities, and not all community partners are required to have a formal agreement with the agency. The Washington Connection Community Partner Program originally established four levels of community partners in the state (Table VI.2), though only the first two levels of partners actually exist. Due to resource constraints, the agency was unable to support any community partners at levels three and four.

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[80] Name and date of birth were the only fields on the application required for partner reimbursement in 2008, but do not necessarily constitute a complete application that can be processed.

[81] In its FY 2013 plan submitted to FNS for approval, DSHS has proposed increasing the payment for online applications from $10 to $20 per online application. It has also proposed increasing the approval rate for the incentive bonus from 60 to 65 percent approval rate.

Table VI.2. Washington Connection Community Partner Levels and Responsibilities

Community Partner Level	Responsibilities
Level 1 – Host Organization	Display and provide printed materials about the state's online system, Washington Connection
	Provide applicants with access to a computer with an icon for the state's online system
	Answer applicants' questions about the online system website
Level 2 – Assisting Agency	Same as Level 1
	Provide applicants with assistance in completing and submitting the online application
Level 3	Same as Levels 1 and 2
	Agency provides computers to the community partner
Level 4	Same as Levels 1 through 3
	Agency outstations eligibility worker(s) at the community partner

Source: Information provided by the Washington DSHS.

Note: Although Level 4 community partners are not implemented in the state, other outstationed eligibility workers in Washington are located at federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) in the state.

All community partners register with the agency, and Level 2 or higher community partners also have formal agreements with DSHS. By registering as a community partner, an organization receives seasonal newsletters from the agency and is also assigned to a regional community partner coordinator, who serves as the organization's point of contact with the agency. Upon registering, community partners designate the level they want to be. They also choose their type of access. Limited access community partners do not have their addresses published and provide assistance to their customers only, whereas public access community partners have their addresses published via the agency website and can assist the general public. The agency website hosts a directory of public access community partners that includes a map that clients can click on to narrow the listings.

Level 2 assisting agencies receive a Washington Connection ID to log in to the online system while assisting clients with the online application. Washington Connection IDs are also used by outreach partners to log in to the online system. They enable the partner to view the applications they helped complete and allow the agency to track the organization's performance. Level 2 assisting agencies are required to enter into data-sharing and nondisclosure agreements with the agency to receive a Washington Connection ID.

d.   Policy Simplification

The policies DSHS has implemented as part of Washington's modernization efforts aimed to lower clients' barriers and lessen burden on local office staff (Figure VI.6). Simplified reporting, broad-based categorical eligibility, and reduced verification of household composition are intended to simplify processes for clients and expand access to the program. A pilot launched in Spokane that outsources EBT replacement to a third-party vendor was designed to clear the task of issuing replacement EBT cards from local office staff and free more of their time as they contend with rapidly increasing caseloads.

Figure VI.6. Summary of Policy Changes, Washington
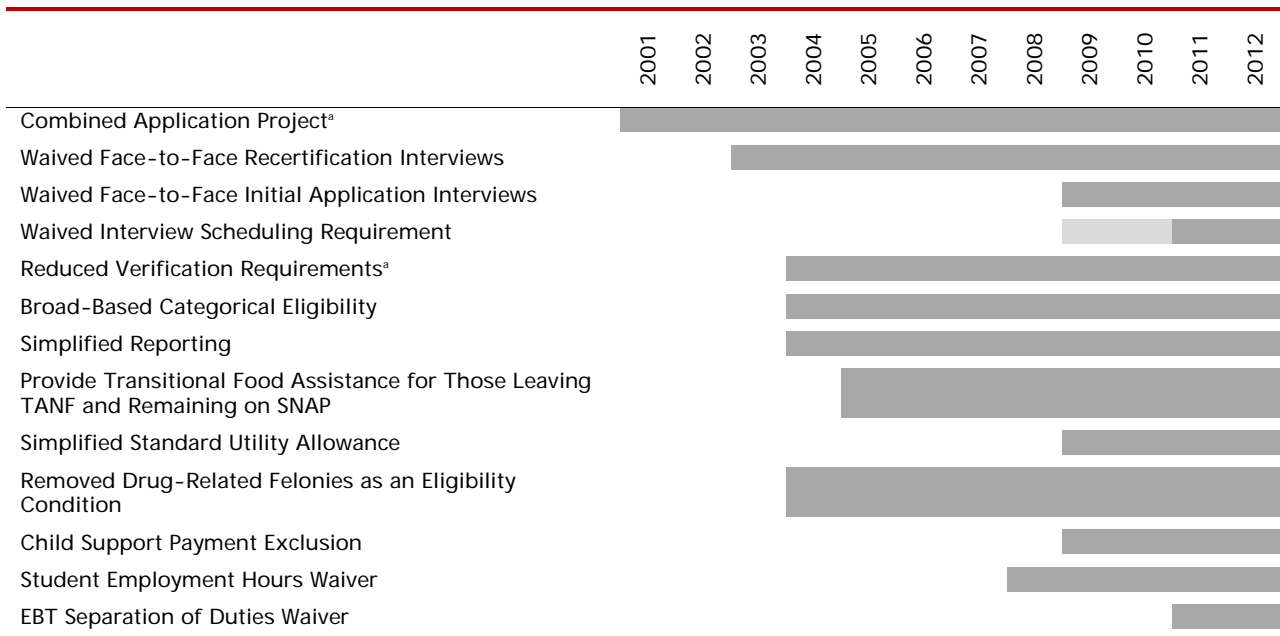
Source:　　Information reported to Mathematica by the Washington DSHS.

[a] A demonstration waiver was first approved in 2001 and extended in 2006.

[b] A waiver for simplified reporting was approved in 2004 and amended to include elderly and disabled households in 2009. A waiver to change reporting for SSI and OASDI was approved in 2005.

☐　Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.

▨　Initiative in statewide implementation.

Policies aimed at reducing the complexity of reporting for clients, such as simplified reporting and reduced verification of household composition, are also intended to reduce error rates and determination times. DSHS received a waiver from FNS in 2004 allowing simplified reporting for all households except those containing elderly or disabled individuals. In 2009 this waiver was extended to include all households. Under the waiver, clients do not have to report any changes unless their income exceeds 130 percent of the federal poverty level. The policy requires that DSHS act on all changes reported, rather than only those that would increase the client's benefits. In 2009, DSHS implemented reduced verification requirements for household composition. Lessening these verification requirements makes the process for clients and eligibility workers more streamlined. DSHS needs to verify only a client's household composition when the eligibility worker suspects it might be inaccurate.

In 2004, DSHS obtained a waiver to implement broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) in Washington. From May 2004 through September 2008, the asset test was eliminated for households with incomes up to 130 percent of the federal poverty level. In October 2008, DSHS expanded its BBCE to include households with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level, the maximum allowed by federal law.

In December 2011, the Spokane community service office piloted a policy in which replacement EBT cards were no longer available in the local office, except in narrowly defined circumstances.[82] Clients needing a replacement card instead had to call J.P. Morgan, the EBT card vendor, to request a replacement. Replacement cards would arrive in the mail within 10 to 12 days. The pilot was designed to reduce the number of replacement cards requested, under the assumption that if replacement cards were harder to obtain, clients would be more careful with their original card. It was also designed to reduce the burden on local office staff. With staffing reductions and realignments, replacing EBT cards has placed an increasing strain on staff. Staff in the Spokane office reported that they issued 200 to 300 EBT cards a day before the pilot. By January 2012 this number had fallen to about 90 cards per day, as some people still could obtain replacements in person under the exceptions allowed by the policy.

Though Spokane staff acknowledged that the pilot reduced the number of replacement cards issued, some suggested the pilot actually increased staff burden. Because customers were accustomed to receiving replacements in person, many argued with staff when informed of the new policy. Staff members described verbal altercations that raised the tension levels in the lobby to unacceptable levels. Moreover, staff members reported that loss of an EBT card was not always due to irresponsibility on the clients' part, citing EBT card theft from homeless clients as an example. They further suggested that 10 to 12 days was too long for many clients to wait to shop for groceries. Some of the clients' frustration with the policy change might have stemmed from the fact that it was a pilot policy. Statewide information sources, such as the call center and the DSHS website, still indicated that replacement EBT cards were available at local offices (which was true everywhere but Spokane).

B. Changes in Outcomes Following Modernization

Key outcomes in Washington over the study period showed positive trends in cost reduction, decreased eligibility determination time, and improved client satisfaction. Average monthly costs per case fell almost 70 percent from 2000 to 2011, far better than the national and regional average changes during the same period. DSHS introduced same-day service for some clients and cut average determination times. After a 2008 peak of almost 17 days, Washington brought its average processing time to fewer than 9 days by mid-2010. Finally, clients reported appreciating Washington's modernization changes, particularly the fast determination times available to clients applying in a local office.

The drawback to modernization in Washington appears to be increased stress for DSHS staff. Many eligibility workers reported decreased job satisfaction, citing the lack of control over their workload and demanding performance standards. Local office managers also reported less autonomy over their staffing and procedures under SDR than they previously enjoyed. Some of these complaints might be due to factors beyond SDR. Staff stress could largely be the result of vastly increased workloads, as caseloads have quadrupled since 2000 in Washington and staffing has decreased. Some of the increased workload and decreased control managers have over staffing could be due to the restricted state budget and hiring resulting from the recession, rather than Washington's modernization changes per se. Moreover, most staff who complained of decreased job

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[82] EBT cards can still be obtained in person under the pilot in the case of a natural disaster, if the client is homeless and has a general delivery address, or if the client is staying at a domestic violence shelter.

satisfaction conceded that it was only the restructuring initiative that enabled DSHS to keep up with the rapidly escalating caseloads.

The following section discusses these key outcomes. Appendix F includes more supplementary tables with greater detail.

1.   Client Access and Satisfaction

a.   SNAP Participation and Growth Rates

In Washington, SNAP participation has grown considerably from 2000 to 2011, with the average monthly number of individual SNAP recipients increasing 248 percent (Figure VI.7). Growth rates increased sharply in 2008, mirroring increases in the poverty and unemployment rates beginning that year.

Figure VI.7. Trends in Monthly Average Number of SNAP Recipients and Economic Indicators, 2000-2011, Washington

Source: Participation is based on Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS. Unemployment rates are from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Poverty rates from 2004 to 2010 are from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Briefs. Poverty rates from 2000 to 2003 are from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey.

Although improving program access was not an explicit goal of modernization in Washington, access to SNAP in the state as measured by FNS' PAI[83] showed substantial improvements from 2005 to 2010, increasing from 0.53 to 0.86 (Figure VI.8) and improving from 24th in the nation in 2005 to 8th in 2010. From 2005 through 2007, program access in the state stayed slightly above the national average, but in 2009 and 2010 it increased with an average PAI score 24.3 percent higher than the national average over those two years. Although Washington first implemented categorical

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[83] This indicator measures access by taking the average monthly number of SNAP participants over the course of a calendar year compared with the number of people in each state with incomes below 125 percent of the federal poverty level.

eligibility in 2003, the state expanded its categorical eligibility in 2008 to include households with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level, which could have led to more people being able to access SNAP benefits.[84]

Figure VI.8. Trends in SNAP Program Access Index, 2005- 2010, Washington
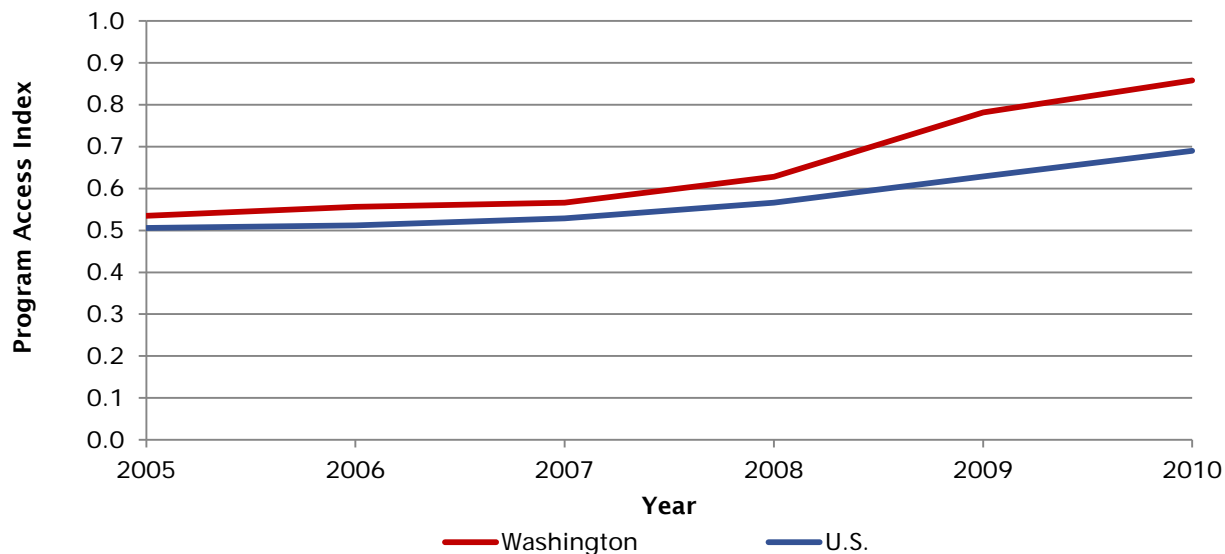
Source: PAI data are from the USDA FNS.

Note: PAI, a measure calculated by FNS, represents a ratio of the average monthly number of SNAP participants over the course of a calendar year to the number of state residents with incomes below 125 percent of the federal poverty level. A higher PAI indicates greater program access.

From 2000 to 2011, demographic characteristics of Washington's caseload showed very little variation. Nonelderly adults' share of the caseload, possibly driven by the concurrent increase in unemployment rates, increased slightly, whereas children's share decreased (Figure VI.9). Although Washington implemented other policies—such as waiving face-to-face interviews at recertification (2003) and at initial application (2009)—to lower program access barriers for clients such as the elderly and disabled, the data do not show major growth in the proportion of participants for those groups. Data on cases with disabled recipients are available for only slightly more than two years (2010 through February 2012), so it is not possible to identify participation trends for this subgroup. Similarly, it is not possible to identify participation trends for different racial and ethnic groups due to missing data.

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[84] Categorical eligibility in Washington included households with incomes up to 130 percent of the federal poverty level from 2003 to 2007.

Figure VI.9. Changes in Characteristics of SNAP Recipients in Washington, 2000- 2011
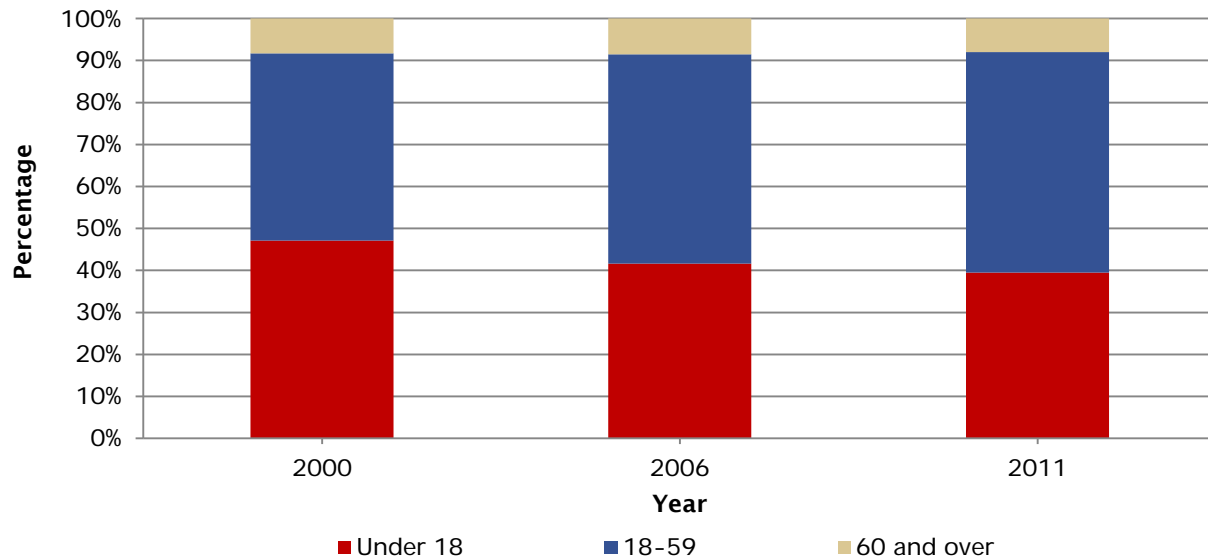
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS.

Note: Data on clients with disabilities are not available before 2010.

b.   Application Submissions

The number of initial applications processed per month in Washington grew slightly from 2000 to 2008, then increased dramatically following the 2008 recession. From August 2000 to September 2008, the number of applications processed averaged 22,250 per month. In October 2008, the number of applications jumped to almost 43,000 per month before settling back to an average of about 35,000 applications per month for the rest of the study period (Figure VI.10).

From 2000 to 2011, application approval rates in the state increased gradually over the study period. The approval rate reached its highest in April 2011 with 74.6 percent of applications being approved (Figure VI.11). At its lowest point in August 2000, the approval rate was 62.4 percent. Reducing barriers through new methods of application, such as online, generally leads to lower approval rates because such measures tend to attract more ineligible applicants. However, because online applications have been available in Washington statewide since 2001, any reduction in approval rates that occurred when online applications were implemented would not be apparent in this analysis.

Figure VI.10. Applications Processed per Month, 2000- 2011, Washington

—— Applications processed per month
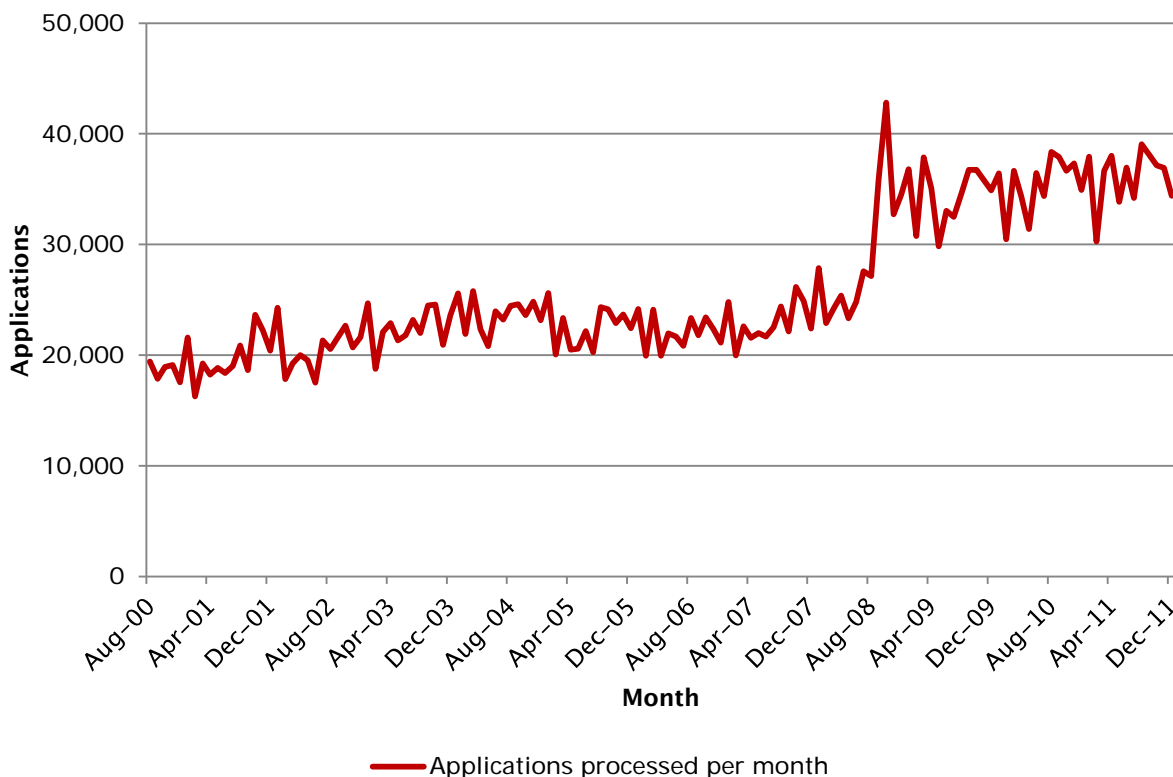
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS.

Figure VI.11. Approval Rate of SNAP Applications by Month, 2000- 2011, Washington

—— Average approval rate of SNAP applications
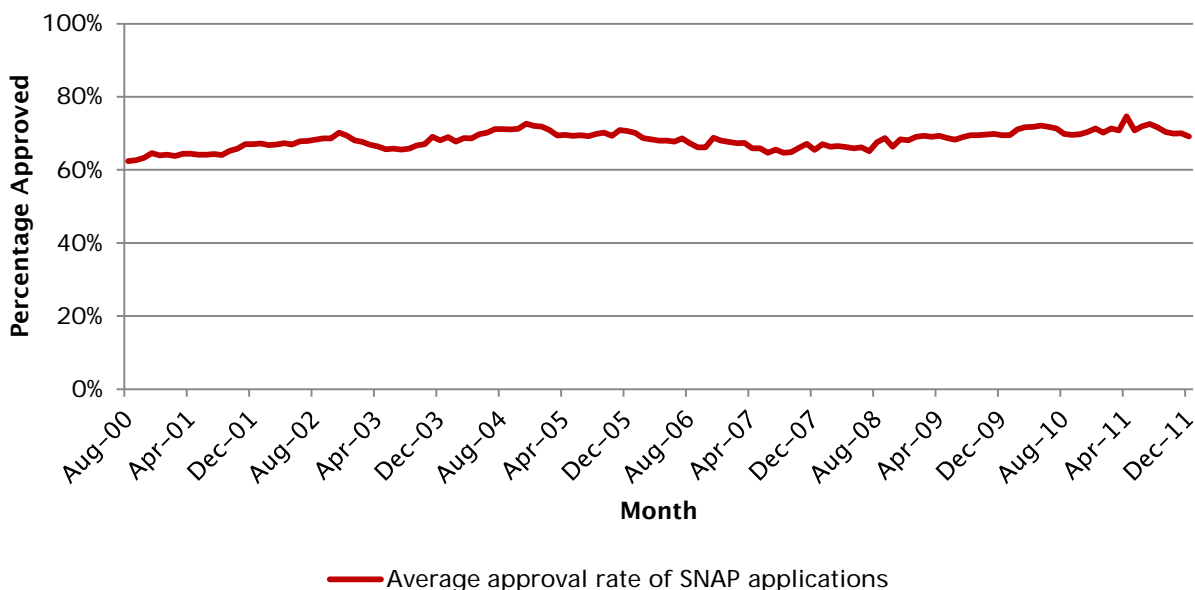
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS.

Processing time for new applications spiked in late 2008, rising to 17.3 days on average in October of that year, as application submissions surged with the economic downturn. Processing time then steadily decreased, reaching a seven-year low of 9.4 days by July 2011. Average processing

time remained under 12 days for the remainder of the study period (Figure VI.12). DSHS's ability to maintain short processing times in the face of sustained high application submissions is likely due in part to timeliness targets implemented under SDR, especially the requirement that clients entering local offices before 2:00 p.m. receive same-day service.

Figure VI.12. Average SNAP Application Processing Time and Timeliness, 2005- 2011, Washington
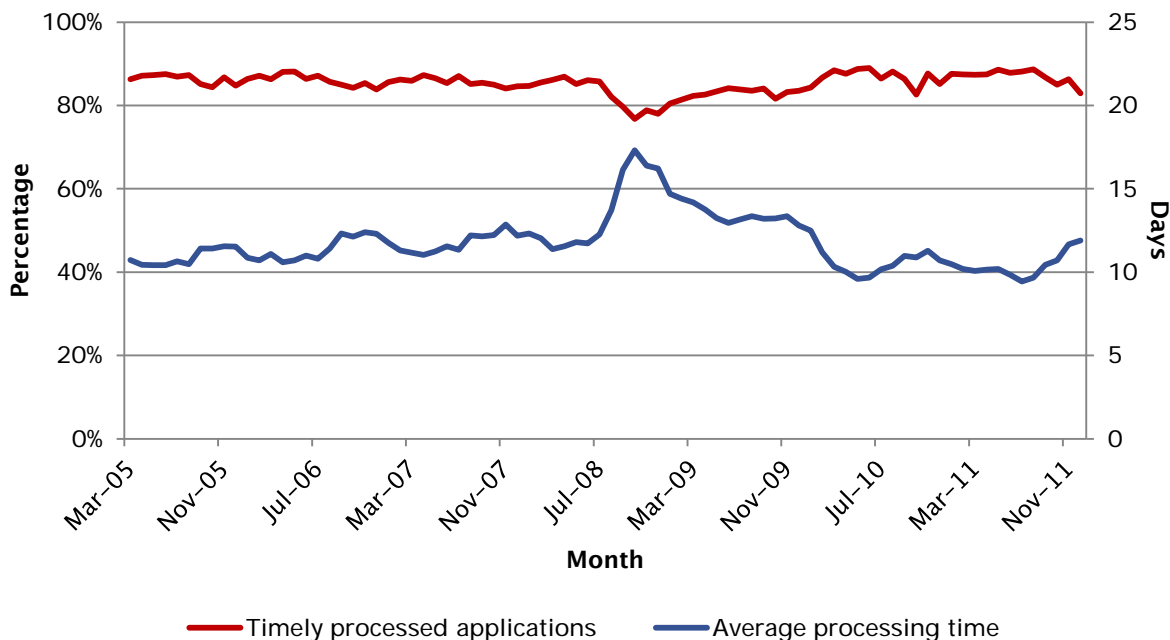
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS.

Note: Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files. The results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application data provided do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications are included in our calculation of timeliness. Applications are considered timely if eligibility determinations are made within 7 days for expedited applications and 30 days for all other applications.

The trends in SNAP reenrollment, as measured by the percentage of applications with recipients who had received benefits two or three months before, remained relatively stable. Overall, the frequency of cycling on and off the program was low over the study period (Figure VI.13).

Figure VI.13. Trends in SNAP Reenrollment, 2000- 2011, Washington
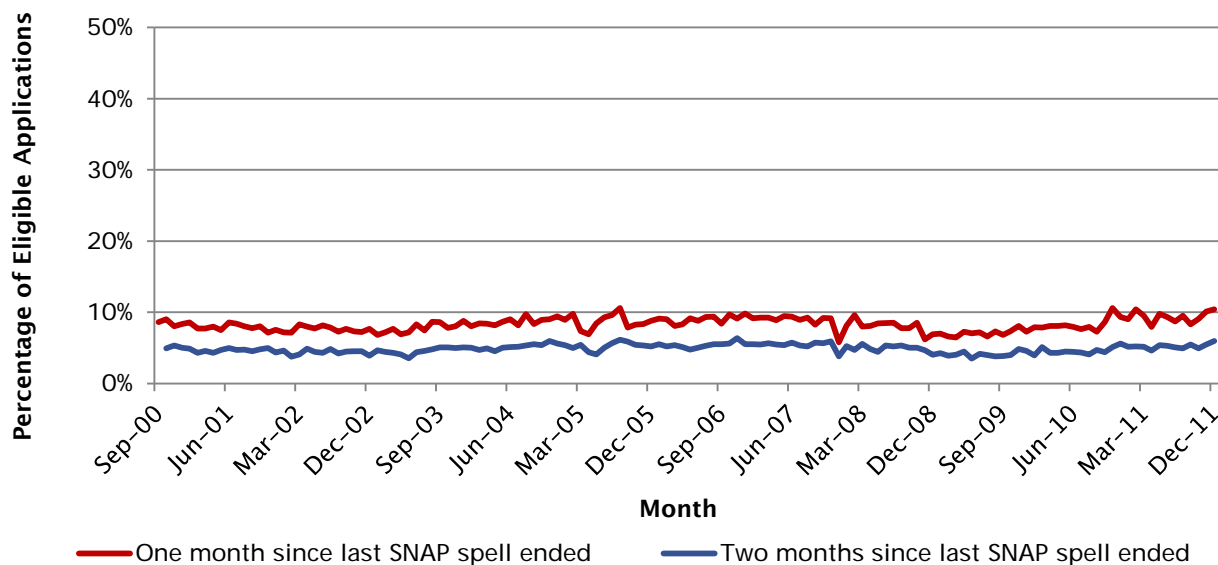
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS.

c.   Clients' Use of New Contact Points

With Washington's expansive and diverse geography, alternative contact points such as the online application, call center, community partner network, and mobile customer service offices have made it easier for clients to access benefits. The need for alternative contact points has increased as budget cuts have led to DSHS closing some local offices. However, because same-day service is possible only in local offices, clients with access to a local office appeared to prefer applying in person, according to focus group participants.

Online application. The availability of the online application has improved access for clients who are comfortable using computers and accessing the Internet, according to staff interviewed and focus group participants. However, elderly and homeless clients are less likely to use the online application due to lack of access to or comfort with the Internet. Clients with limited English or Spanish proficiency might not be able to read the application, which is available only in those two languages.[85]

Identifying the scope of client use of the online application as a new access point is difficult because counts of electronic applications submitted do not distinguish between those submitted from a computer in a local office lobby and those submitted online from a client's home or other location. During our focus groups, many participants and eligible nonparticipants reported that they preferred to apply in person at a local office, even if they were comfortable with technology, because the determination process was much faster (same-day service is possible only when applying in person). Clients wanting same-day service who apply in person do so regularly through Washington

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[85] The Washington Connection website posts portable document format (PDF) versions in 12 other languages that applicants can print and fill out manually, but which are not part of the interactive online application.

Connection using computers available in the lobby of a local office. Therefore, many applications submitted online were likely completed in a local office.

Though Washington has had a statewide online application since 2001, data on online application submissions are available only since DSHS launched the Washington Connection benefits portal in December 2010. Online application submissions through Washington Connection for all DSHS programs (not just SNAP) increased steadily to slightly fewer than 60,000 in mid-2011 and remained around that level for the rest of the study period (Figure VI.14). DSHS information technology staff reported that online applications represented more than half of all applications submitted.

Figure VI.14. Average Monthly Online Applications Started and Completed, 2010- 2011, Washington
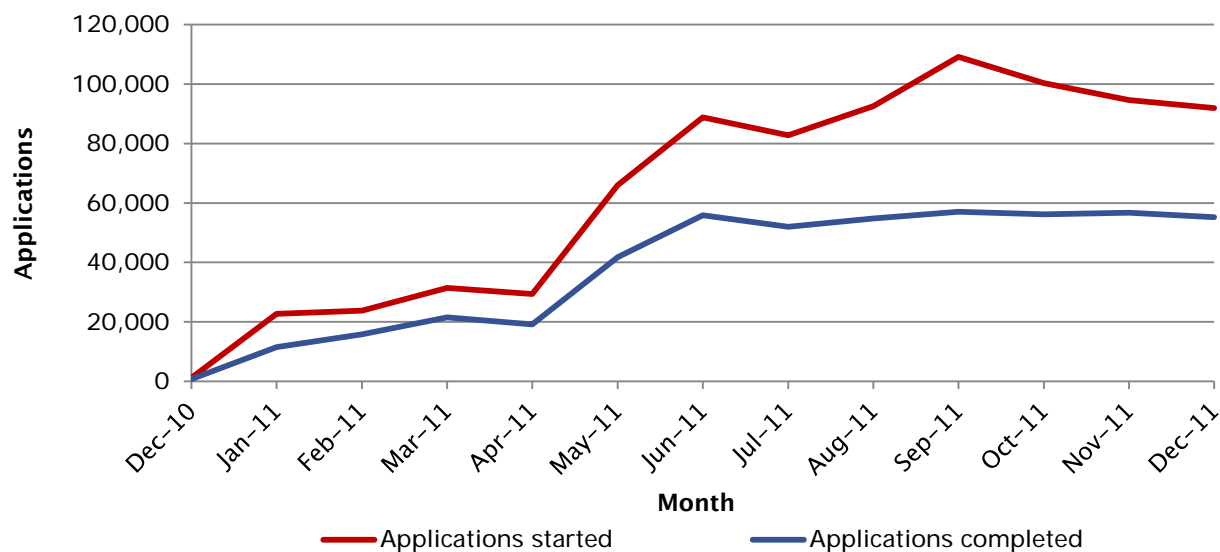
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS.

Call center. The statewide virtual call center provides an additional contact point for clients. Unfortunately, measuring the extent of its use is difficult due to its limited capacity to accept the volume of attempted incoming calls—the number of calls that do not reach the call center due to capacity limitations is not tracked. Furthermore, interpreting call center trends is difficult because 41 local and regional call centers were consolidated into a statewide call center in 2010 and data are only available from 2010 onward.

The number of calls answered and hold times remained steady from 2010 to 2011 (Figure VI.15). However, according to staff interviews the call center lacks the capacity to accept all incoming calls. State staff informed us that many calls do not even make it into the queue to wait for a call agent due to a combination of technological and staffing capacity limitations. As of early 2012, the queue could accommodate only 150 callers on hold at one time for the entire state. Therefore, it is possible that the statistics on calls answered and hold times reflect the call center's capacity for answering calls, rather than the volume of clients attempting to reach the call center.

Figure VI.15. Call Center Performance, 2004- 2011, Washington
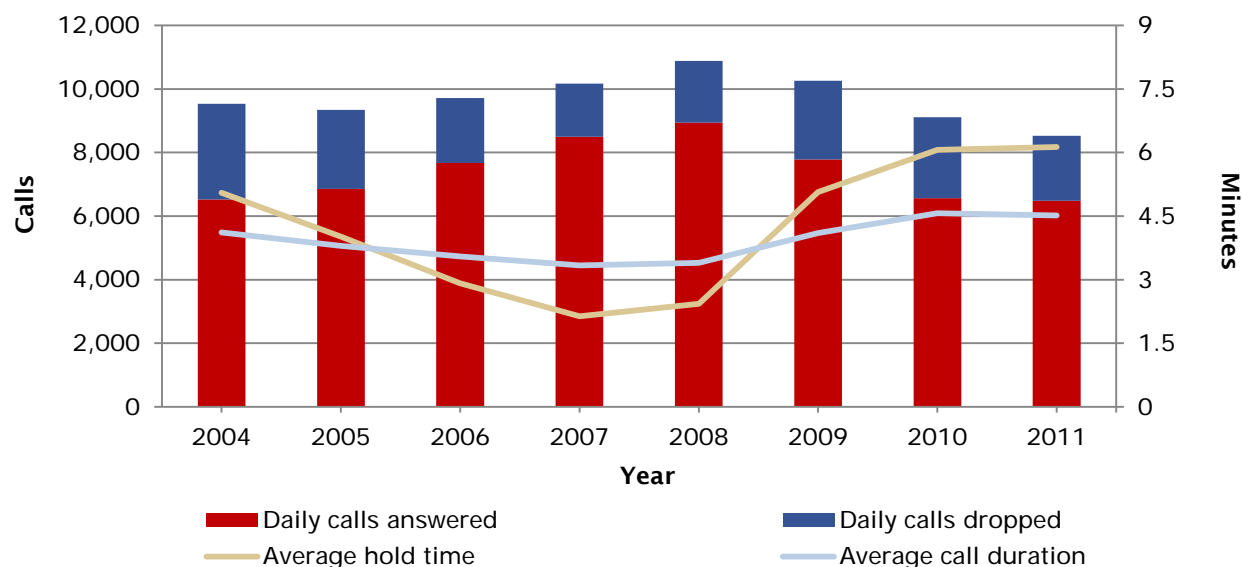
Community partners. The number of applications received from Washington's outreach partners increased almost 50 percent from about 10,000 in FY 2008 to almost 15,000 in FY 2010. Data from FY 2011 include only the first nine months of the year, so it is not clear whether the increasing trend will continue (Table VI.3). Approval rates for applications submitted by outreach partners increased from 2008 to 2010, possibly in response to Washington's adoption of a performance-based compensation model in 2009. In addition to the compensated outreach partners, clients can access the online application or receive application assistance from more than 600 informal community partners in Washington, though no data are available on how many clients receive such assistance.

Table VI.3. Characteristics of Outreach Partners, FY 2008- FY2011, Washington

Characteristics	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011[a]
Number of Outreach Contractors	9	13	10	9
Average Federal Payments	$163,791	$155,606	$164,668	$123,510
Number of Applications Submitted	10,033	13,839	14,726	9,951
Average Approval Rate	51.25%	59.17%	63.64%	63.41%

Source: Information provided to Mathematica by the Washington DSHS.

[a] Data for FY 2011 include October 2010 through June 2011.

d.   Client Satisfaction

Clients generally approved of the changes Washington has made. In particular, focus group participants reported that they appreciated same-day service, faster determination times generally, and no longer having to schedule an appointment for an eligibility interview. Though some clients

reported that they preferred dealing in person with the same case worker every time, most seemed to place more value on determination speed than on personal service. Same-day service has appeared to create a strong incentive for clients to apply in person in local offices, as this is not available via other application methods (such as applying online and contacting the call center).

In contrast, clients reported significant frustration with the call center. Focus group participants reported problems with long hold times and being disconnected. Clients reported frequently not being able to get through to the center. Some disconnections occurred before the client had spoken to anyone, if the triage queue, the first point of contact when contacting the call center, was full. However, other times the disconnection occurred after the client had already waited in the triage queue and spoken to a triage call agent. If the triage call agent transferred the call to a queue that was full, the call was disconnected. Clients were particularly frustrated when they were disconnected in the middle of a call, causing them to have to restart the process.

Though some clients expressed other reservations with modernization changes in Washington, frequently stemming from distrust of technology, faster service appeared to compensate for most clients' reservations. Some of these reservations included information security when using the website and not trusting that their documents would be received if they did not personally hand the documents to a DSHS staff member.

2. Payment Error Rates

The payment error rate in Washington has generally mirrored the national trend of declining error rates. It stayed below the national average error rate from 2000 to 2010 with the exception of one year, 2004 (Figure VI.16).[86] From 2000 to 2003, Washington's error rate was comparable to the national average. In 2004, Washington experienced a spike in error rates above the national average. However, in 2005 Washington's error rate plunged 64 percent, falling far below the national average, where it remained for the rest of the study period.

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[86] Inaccurate payment amounts must be off by a certain threshold to be considered errors. The threshold was $50 in FY 2011 and varied in past years.

Figure VI.16. Trends in SNAP QC Payment Error Rate, 2000- 2010, Washington
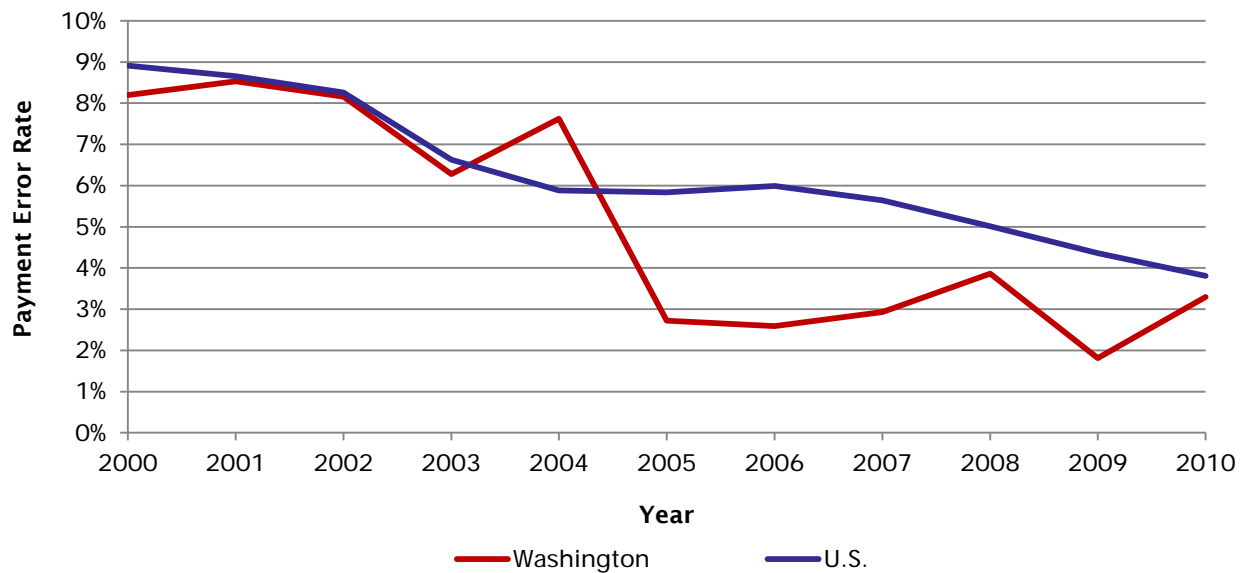
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Negative error rates in Washington fell sharply from more than 16 percent in 2000 to 2 percent in 2006, falling below the national average in 2003. Washington's negative error rate remained low for the remainder of the study period (Figure VI.17).

Figure VI.17. Trends in SNAP QC Negative Error Rate, 2000- 2010, Washington
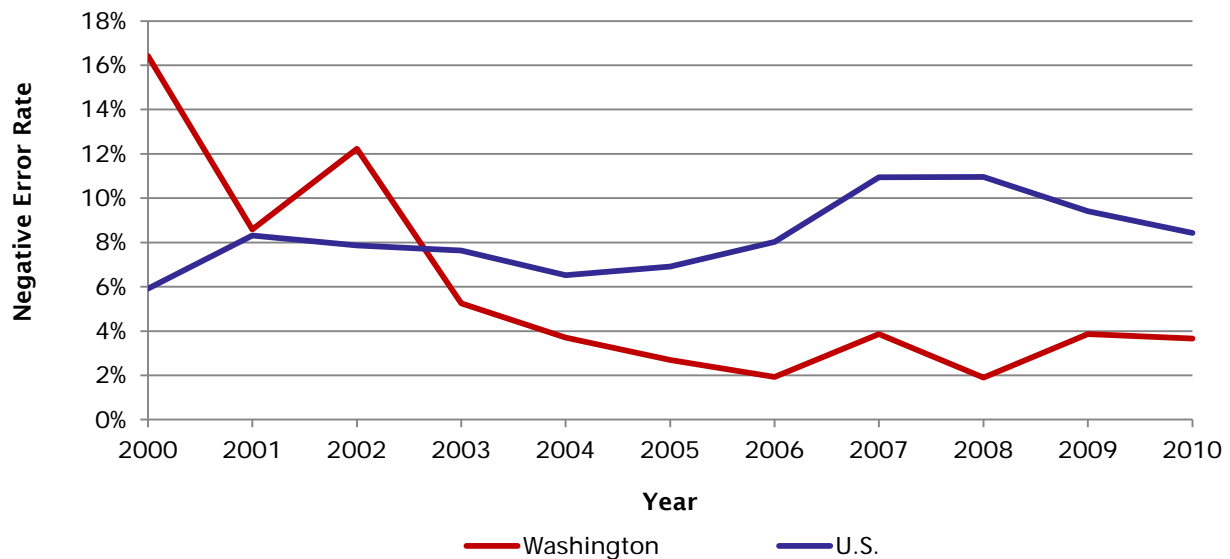
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

State and local office staff pointed to several factors with potentially positive effects on error rates, including electronic case records, the online application, and the state's policy to reduce income verification. State and local office staff identified electronic case records, introduced in Washington in 2003, as helping to improve error rates. They pointed to keystroke errors from manual data entry as a common source of errors, which the move to electronic case records reduced.

Staff also cited the online application as possibly decreasing error rates. Rules embedded in the online application do not allow clients to proceed without filling in certain required fields which might otherwise be left blank, and the online application walks the applicant through the process using a step-by-step interface, which provides users guidance as the user completes the application. Finally, in 2004 Washington reduced the requirements for income verification, reducing opportunities for errors.

Staff whom we interviewed identified three main factors that could lead to increased error rates. First, because work is shared under SDR, the more eligibility workers that touch a case, the more likely previous actions or notes on the case might be misinterpreted, despite the state's use of standard narrative templates designed to reduce miscommunication. Because multiple eligibility workers can touch a case, no one worker is ultimately responsible for it, which makes errors more likely. Washington has a "fix it and move on" practice, under which errors, when identified, are fixed by whoever spots them, and not necessarily reported back to the worker who made the error. This policy is designed to improve efficiency, but staff at multiple levels identified it as a flaw in Washington's training plan because workers are not notified they are making errors and might repeatedly make the same errors.

The second factor possibly increasing errors is the high volume of work resulting from the large caseload increases. Additionally, under SDR, staff feel more pressure to complete work very quickly. Lead workers and supervisors also both have higher workloads and spend less time auditing their subordinates' work than in the past. According to one local office supervisor, lead workers audit about three cases per worker per month.

Finally, a change in eligibility policy related to students could increase errors. Simplified reporting, implemented in Washington with a waiver in 2004, does not require clients to report a change in their student status. Some students are eligible for SNAP, but others are not. With the downturn in the economy, more people have returned to school. When clients go back to school, they do not have to report this change, but it might cause them to become ineligible, without them necessarily realizing it. Because it is not reported, it is harder for eligibility workers to catch this change, causing an increase in errors of this type.

3. Administrative Costs

Washington's total administrative costs fluctuated over the course of the study period, ending in 2011 just below their 2000 level (in constant 2005 dollars). Washington's costs grew as the state caseloads grew, until costs began to fall in 2009 (Figure VI.18). Changes in overall administrative costs were consistently below the national average for state costs and far below the rest of the Western region. Implementing SDR, Washington's process-based business model, in 2009 and 2010 might explain the drop in costs during that time.

Figure VI.18. Percentage Change in Total SNAP Administrative Costs from 2000 Baseline, 2000-2011, Washington (2005 dollars)
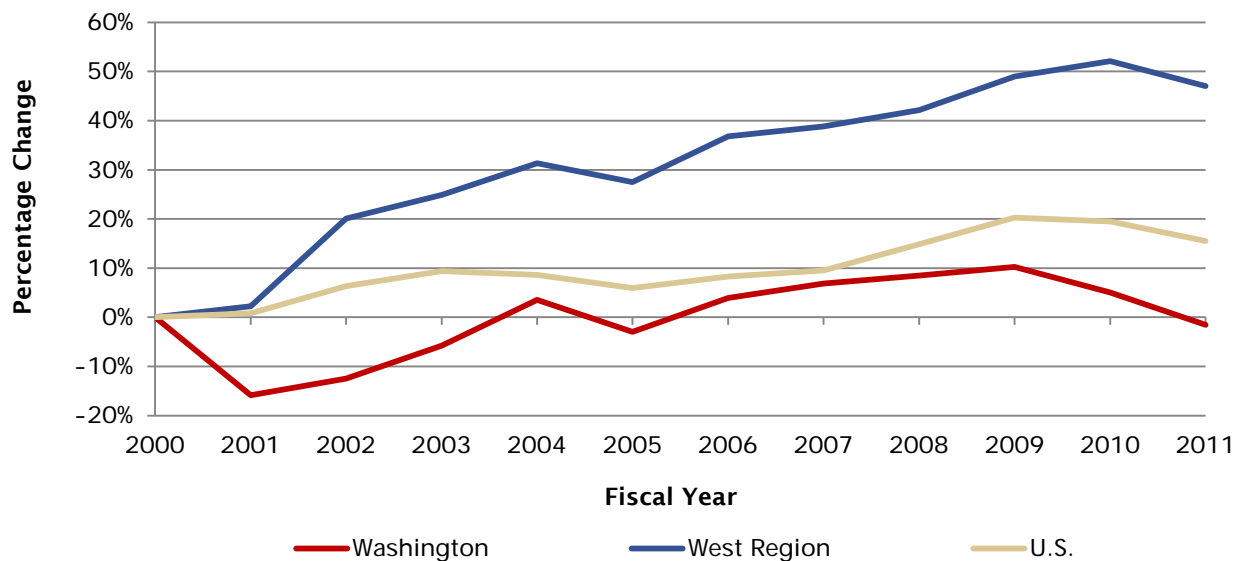
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

Average monthly costs per case in Washington declined over the study period, falling more than 75 percent from 2000 to 2011. This change far exceeded the national and regional average changes in state administrative costs per case (Figure VI.19). Total administrative costs remained at nearly baseline levels (2 percent below the baseline), despite caseloads quadrupling, increasing from a monthly average of 133,481 active cases in 2000 to an average of 545,533 active cases per month in 2011.

Certification costs comprise the greatest portion of the state's total administrative costs, averaging 62 percent from 2000 to 2011 (Table VI.4). ADP operations costs make up the next-highest share of administrative costs with an average of 9 percent of the total costs over the period. Issuance costs make up an average of 6 percent of total costs.

At the beginning of the period, certification costs were at their highest, constituting 69 percent of the state's total cost. They then fell to slightly below half of all costs in 2010, before increasing to 63 percent in 2011. Washington has realized greater cost savings in certification costs than in the region and the nation. Overall, certification costs have decreased, staying below the baseline every year and reaching their lowest in 2010, when they dipped 24 percent below the baseline (Figure VI.20).

Figure VI.19. Percentage Change in Average Monthly Costs per Case from 2000 Baseline, 2000-2011, Washington (2005 Dollars)
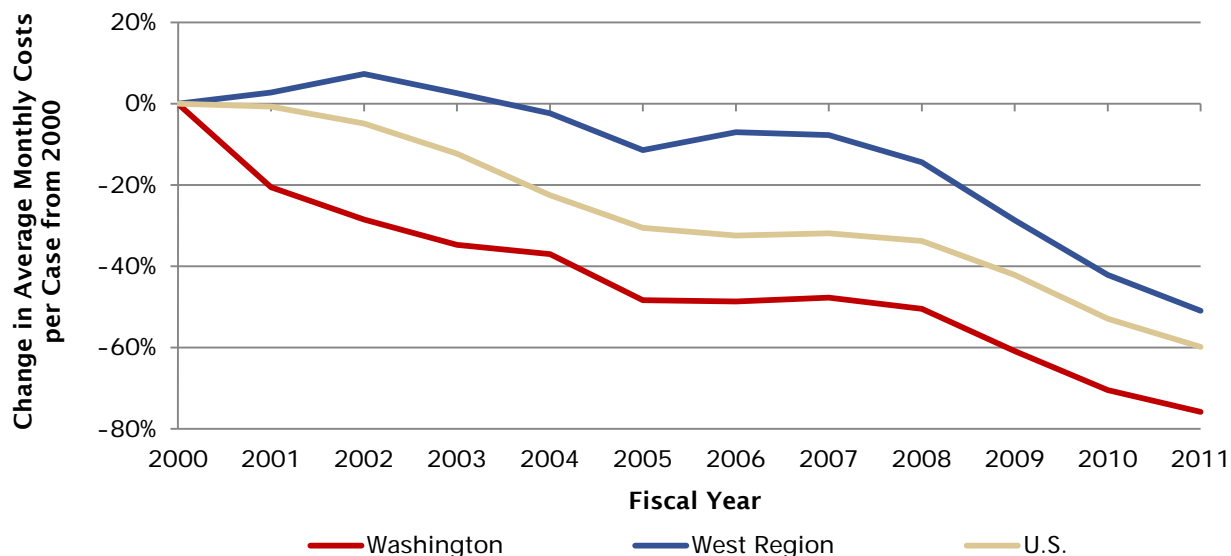
Source: Mathematica tabulations of average monthly costs and average monthly caseloads from the USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

Table VI.4. Allocation of Reported State Share of SNAP Administrative Costs for Washington, FY 2000-2011 (Percent)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Certification	68.6	67.1	66.7	66.3	62.5	65.6	61.3	59.3	56.7	53.0	49.6	62.9
Issuance	1.8	5.1	5.0	4.6	5.5	6.0	6.3	6.2	6.5	6.5	6.1	7.7
Quality Control	4.9	5.8	5.6	4.7	4.4	4.1	2.7	3.0	3.2	2.8	3.2	2.8
Fraud	6.9	2.1	2.8	2.3	2.0	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.6	1.7	1.6
ADP Operations	9.9	10.3	9.1	8.6	8.9	8.5	7.8	8.5	8.3	8.3	8.9	10.9
ADP Development	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5
Employment and Training	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	1.4	2.8	5.7	10.0	12.9	8.5
Outreach	2.7	4.2	4.8	5.8	6.4	5.8	5.8	5.3	3.1	4.0	3.7	3.3
Miscellaneous	2.0	2.1	2.0	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.7
SNAP Education	2.8	3.2	3.9	5.9	8.4	6.4	11.2	11.4	12.9	12.1	12.3	0.0
Unspecified Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Figure VI.20. Percentage Change in SNAP Certification Costs from 2000 Baseline, 2000- 2011, Washington (2005 dollars)
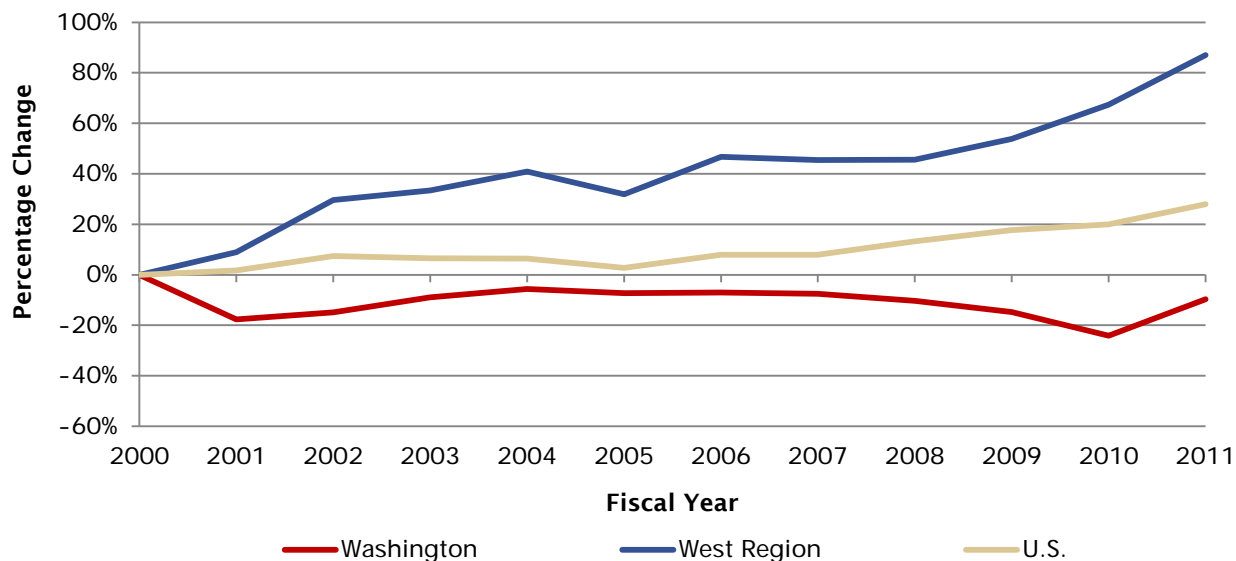
Issuance costs, on the other hand, have more than quadrupled, increasing 327 percent from 2000 to 2011 and rising from $823,120 to $3.5 million (Figure VI.21). Caseloads also quadrupled during this period and the increasing issuance costs echoed this trend because both initial applicant and replacement EBT cards are distributed in the local offices in most parts of the state. The state is in the planning phases of transitioning to the distribution of replacement EBT cards by mail through a contractor. Issuance costs do not constitute a large share of the state's total costs, averaging less than 5.1 percent of the state's total administrative costs from 2000 to 2011.

Figure VI.21. Percentage Change in SNAP Issuance Costs from 2000 Baseline, 2000- 2011, Washington (2005 dollars)
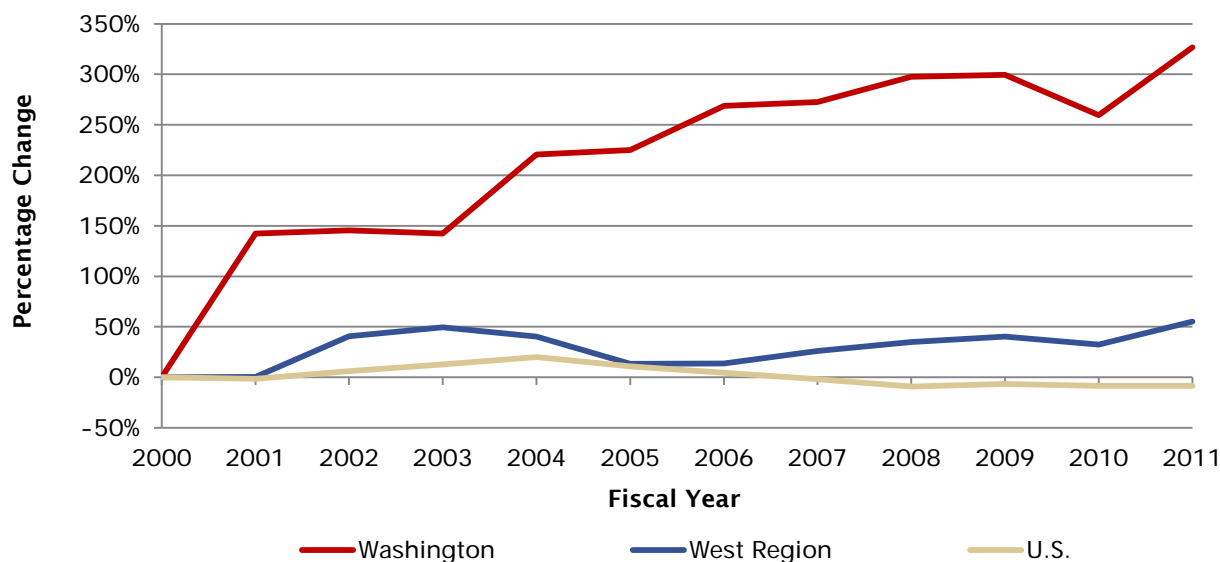
4.   SNAP Staff

a.   Staffing Levels

Although Washington has contended with significant increases in its caseload, it is doing so in the face of decreasing staffing levels. Staffing levels have decreased across the state as a result of a hiring freeze that has been in place since 2010. The agency is unable to add new staff, nor is it able to replace staff who leave the agency or retire. All of the local offices we visited had vacancies they were unable to fill because of the hiring freeze. During our first round site visit in October 2011, only one local office had been granted special permission to add two new eligibility workers, but they were the first new hires the office had had in more than two years. By January 2012, the hiring freeze was beginning to lift in some areas of the state, according to regional staff, with Region 1 obtaining permission to hire 14 eligibility workers.

Turnover exacerbated the impact of the hiring freeze, particularly in urban areas in the western half of the state, because the departing staff could not be replaced. Local offices in urban areas experienced higher than average turnover rates according to a local office manager, who also mentioned that the problem is generally more prominent among newer eligibility workers with fewer than five years of experience. The job market in urban areas generally makes employment more transitory than in rural areas.

Overall, the agency experienced a 13.7 percent decrease among the financial services specialist series (Table VI.5).[87] Beside the implementation of the hiring freeze to cut costs, DSHS also closed, reduced, or merged a number of local offices to consolidate operations and save on facilities costs. As of July 2012, the state had 52 brick-and-mortar local offices and 2 mobile local offices. Region 1, in the eastern and central parts of the state which is generally more rural, had a 7.2 percent decrease in staffing. The agency closed 7 local offices in this region; total office closures in the state numbered 11. Regions 2 and 3, located in the western and more urban part of the state, had greater decreases in staff than Region 1, losing 13.4 percent and 15.7 percent of staff respectively. Region 3 lost 2 local offices, one in 2000 and the other in 2002; Region 3 lost 2 local offices, both in 2003. The statewide virtual call center faced the greatest loss of staff, with reductions of 16.6 percent.

Table VI.5. Number of Eligibility Worker FTEs by Administrative Unit, 2008 and 2012, Washington

	2008	2012	Percentage Change
Region 1	536.6	497.7	-7.3%
Region 2	669.1	579.8	-13.4%
Region 3	650.4	548.4	-15.7%
Statewide Call Center	862.0	719.0	-16.6%
Total	2,718.1	2,344.8	-13.7%

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS.

Note: 2008 data are as of July 31, 2008; 2012 data are as of January 31, 2012.

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[87] The financial services specialist series includes eligibility workers, known as financial services specialists in Washington; lead workers; and supervisors.

Although the number of staff decreased in Washington, the caseload increased, causing eligibility workers' workload to intensify. In July 2008, an eligibility worker had an average caseload of 102 cases. By January 2012, an eligibility worker's average caseload had more than doubled to an average of 249 cases per eligibility worker (Figure VI.22).

Figure VI.22. Eligibility Staffing Levels and Cases per Eligibility Worker, July 2008 and January 2012, Washington
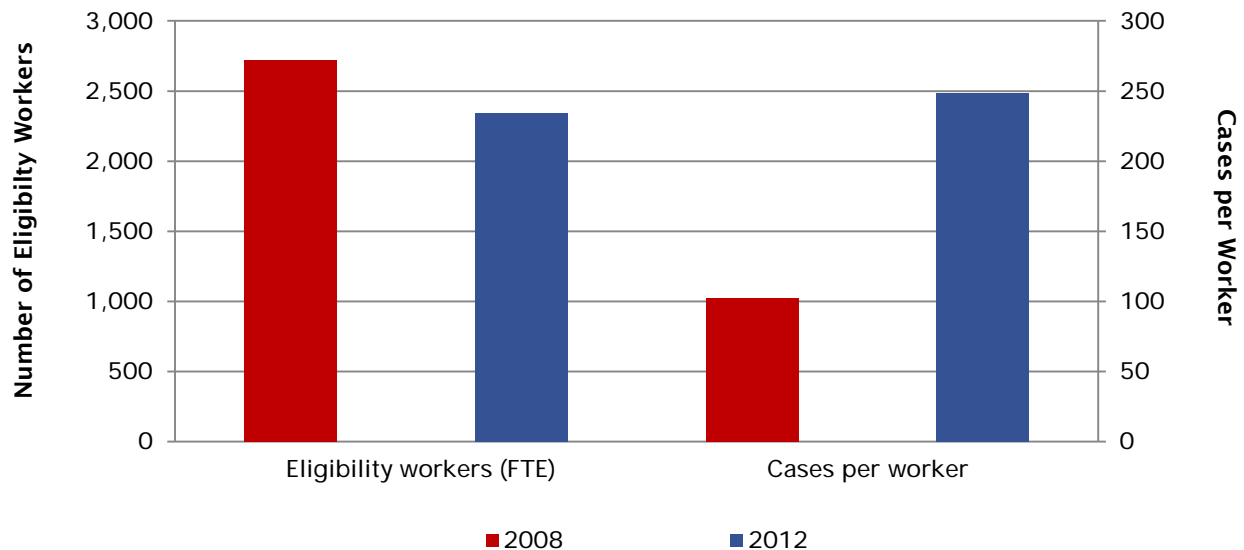
b.   Staff Satisfaction

Though most staff acknowledged that SDR has enabled the department to keep up with surging caseloads, many staff members reported lower job satisfaction as a result of the changes. One reason for this lower job satisfaction is a loss of ownership over their work. Because of the shift from a traditional case worker model to a process-based model, eligibility workers feel less control over their work. Eligibility workers no longer maintain a caseload in which they work a case for the entire duration the case is active. When eligibility workers open client files in the eligibility system to work on a case, they do not know who worked the cases before them. They sometimes find mistakes they have to fix. Sometimes, despite having standardized templates, the status of a case is unclear because of an ambiguous narrative completed by the previous worker. Numerous eligibility workers reported carefully examining the entire case, rather than only the portion they are supposed to work, because they do not trust that previous workers have done their work correctly and they do not want to be held accountable for someone else's mistake. Local office eligibility workers said the lack of trust between workers has affected their job satisfaction negatively.

Another reason for lower satisfaction is stress. Eligibility workers interviewed in locations across the state have reported increased stress levels. Because changes that have occurred under SDR have placed more emphasis on making processes more efficient, eligibility workers are more accountable for production speed, which has increased pressure on workers and caused them to feel rushed in their work. Although all eligibility workers we spoke with described increased stress, the staff in eastern Washington generally spoke less favorably about SDR than did those in the western part of the state. However, the primary source of stress, even in eastern Washington, appears to be increased workload rather than changes that have occurred as part of modernization. Increased

caseloads and the hiring freeze have meant more work to be done by fewer eligibility workers. According to an eligibility worker in an urban local office, on average she handled 6 to 8 cases per day before SDR and now handles 12 to 16 cases per day.

Local office managers reported having lower job satisfaction as well due to decreased flexibility under SDR. Because SDR standardizes processes and relies on staffing formulas to determine appropriate staffing in each office, office managers have less decision-making authority. As a result, local office managers have less ability to adapt to unique local circumstances. For example, one local office manager mentioned having more control over staffing before SDR. He was able to shift workers across multiple offices he supervised in response to shifting needs and was able to bring on temporary workers seasonally to adapt to unique enrollment cycles in his area. However, some of this perceived decrease in authority and flexibility might actually stem from hiring freezes rather than changes as a result of SDR.

Staff at various levels felt that statewide portability undermines local knowledge and that eligibility workers working a case remotely do not have knowledge about unique factors affecting the locale where the case is based. Conversely, when they are working a case on the other side of the state, the workers know whether they are missing some contextual knowledge that might help them perform their work better.

C. Lessons Learned

The successes and challenges Washington encountered in its modernization effort experience reveal five main lessons to help guide future modernization decisions in that state and elsewhere:

1. **Implementing a process-based model might improve efficiency.** DSHS designed and implemented its process-based eligibility model, SDR, with the explicit goal of increasing the department's capacity for processing determinations in anticipation of steep caseload increases as the 2008 recession set in. Caseloads doubled from January 2008 to December 2011; in the same period, staffing levels fell by almost 14 percent. Average cases per worker increased by almost 150 percent. Average determination times spiked initially but receded to their pre-recession level when SDR was implemented in 2009 and 2010. Though the analysis design used in this study cannot demonstrate a causal connection between DSHS's process-based model and the department's application-processing capacity, eligibility staff reported in interviews that their speed of processing cases has doubled. Even most staff who did not personally like the change to SDR acknowledged its benefits. In particular, SDR enabled individual eligibility workers and the agency as a whole to handle the surge in SNAP caseloads.

2. **Process-based systems might create insufficient accountability.** Washington's process-based model, SDR, breaks the determination process into individual tasks that can be shared among eligibility workers across the state. Although this feature can improve efficiency in the determination process, staff from the frontline level to senior management reported in interviews that it has led to problems with accountability for case accuracy. Because workers often process one small part of a case and never see it again, they often do not learn about errors they have made. Some of the lack of accountability might be because caseloads are so high that lead workers and supervisors spend more time working cases and less time auditing their subordinates' work. However, eligibility workers in multiple offices reported that the lack of ownership of a

case or set of cases has led to an increase of errors and an erosion of trust in the quality of one another's work.

3. **Same-day service is possible—and clients appreciate it.** One of Washington's greatest modernization successes was the advent of same-day service for clients applying for benefits. Local offices in Washington are set up for clients to initiate and submit an application, conduct an eligibility interview, submit verification documents, receive an eligibility determination, and (if eligible) receive an EBT card with benefits in a single visit. To be guaranteed same-day service, clients must enter an office before 2:00 p.m. with all necessary verification documents. Focus group participants reported being highly satisfied with the speed of service, especially compared with the previous system, in which clients might have waited weeks for an eligibility interview.

4. **Self-service options are convenient for clients and can reduce staff burden.** The installation of lobby online application stations and automated queuing systems has added convenience for clients entering local offices. Clients are immediately placed in a queue to meet with an eligibility worker and can apply online while they wait. Eligibility workers who then meet with the client can complete the application process and conduct an interview more efficiently.

5. **Unrealistic expectations can lead to inadequate planning.** DSHS planned the statewide virtual call center at the same time it planned and rolled out SDR. With the main departmental focus on SDR, planning for the call center suffered from unrealistically optimistic assumptions about the technical and staffing capacity the call center would need. As a result, clients find it very difficult to reach the call center. The limited staff and technical capacity makes it difficult for clients even to make it to the hold queue. Additionally, a large portion of the backlog work initially intended to be completed by call center staff was pushed back to local office staff.

6. **Flexible partnership models and incentives can leverage community organizations effectively.** DSHS operates a tiered community partner model in which organizations can choose among different levels of engagement. Washington adopted a performance-based incentive system for its network of outreach partners in 2009, which could explain the increase in approval rates of applications received from outreach partners.

VII. CROSS- STATE SYNTHESIS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Modernization was an evolutionary process in the five states studied. In each state, SNAP policies and procedures were continuously examined and modified to meet modernization goals. These changes appear to have been effective at improving efficiency without reducing program access or increasing payment errors. However, they were not without pitfalls.

This chapter synthesizes key findings across the five states. It first provides an overview of modernization experiences, focusing on common initiatives while highlighting key differences in implementation and noting those most apparent from a client's perspective. It also examines patterns of changes in key outcomes in the context of modernization. The chapter concludes with a discussion of challenges and successes, and finally lessons that can be learned from the experiences of the case study states.

A. Modernization Experiences Across States

Each state's approach to modernization was unique, due to differing goals and contextual factors. All five case study states sought to use modernization initiatives to improve the efficiency of SNAP administration. The desire to reduce administrative costs and staff burden drove many of the modernization decisions in states. The push for efficiency had many sources. For example, legislative mandates to cut costs in Florida and Utah and hiring freezes in Georgia and Washington were key factors in modernization initiatives in those states. The effects of hiring freezes tended to be felt more strongly in urban than in rural areas, so equalizing workloads across offices was a related goal in some states. In all states, surging caseloads coinciding with falling revenue triggered by the 2008 recession necessitated greater efficiency to meet the growing need for assistance within constrained resources. Beyond the study states, results of a 2008 survey of all state SNAP agencies indicated that the primary reason for modernizing the delivery of SNAP was to help staff handle increased caseloads (Rowe et al. 2010).

A variety of other goals also affected the direction of modernization. All case study states wanted to increase program access. Less common goals included improving error rates, consistency of operations and caseload distribution across offices, and customer service. Modernization goals can also shift over time. For example, a focus on increasing access might be overshadowed by an emphasis on improving efficiency as caseloads rise.

In addition to such deliberate goals, other contextual factors played a role in driving modernization decisions. All states were subject to the same federal performance incentives and penalties. However, other key contextual factors varied by state. In addition to the priorities of state legislatures, the influences of other stakeholders, such as labor unions, can play important roles in defining modernization approaches.

1. Key Aspects of Modernization Initiatives

a. Similarities and Differences in States' Implementation of Common Modernization Activities

As described in Chapters II through VI, each case study state implemented modernization initiatives in four categories: (1) restructuring of administrative functions, (2) expanding uses of technology, (3) simplifying policy, and (4) partnering with other organizations. Table VII.1 summarizes some of the most common activities across case study states, and Appendix Table G.1

lists additional modernization activities, noting the stage(s) of the SNAP life cycle in which each is relevant.

Table VII.1. Key Modernization Changes in Study States

Modernization Initiatives	Florida	Georgia	Massachusetts	Utah	Washington
Call Center	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Specialization of Local Office Staff by Task	✓	✓	✓		✓
Telecommuting	✓	✓[b]		✓	
Online Application	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Online Accounts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Online Recertification	✓	✓		✓	✓
Document Imaging/Electronic Case Files	✓	pilot		✓	✓
Waiver of Face-to-Face Interviews (at application and recertification)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eligibility Simplifications[a]	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reduced Verification Requirements	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simplified Reporting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Formal Community Partnership Networks	✓	✓	✓		✓

[a] Including broad-based categorical eligibility, CAPs, exclusions of certain types of income or assets, standard deductions, and removal of certain conditions on eligibility.

[b] In Georgia, only call center staff telecommute.

1) Restructuring of Administrative Functions

All five states made changes to their administrative staffing structures as part of their modernization efforts. These changes typically included centralizing some administrative functions at the state or regional level and increasing the specialization of staff in local offices. Centralization of specific tasks aims to improve efficiency and reduce the workload of local office staff, freeing them to conduct core eligibility and case management activities. Specialization of staff also aims to improve efficiency, by enabling staff to focus on a more limited set of tasks, thus building their expertise—and speed—in that particular area over time. However, each case study state developed organizational structures tailored to its specific context and goals.

Centralization. The most common form of centralization was the establishment of a call center reachable through a single toll-free telephone number. All five study states established some sort of call center, but the core purpose and roles of call center staff vary considerably by state, as shown in Table VII.2. At one extreme is Utah, which centralized operations such that all SNAP eligibility staff in the state are now call agents.[88] At the opposite extreme is Massachusetts, where call agents are not authorized eligibility workers, so their role is limited to answering basic questions. In the other three study states, call center staff focus on processing changes based on information received between certification dates—from clients (by telephone or online) or through data exchanges.

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[88] Local offices are now employment centers; the staff remaining there can provide basic assistance in completing an application.

Table VII.2. Call Center Functions Across Study States

Call Center Functions	Florida	Georgia	Massachusetts	Utah	Washington
Geographic Scope	Statewide	Statewide	Statewide	Statewide	Statewide
Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Functions					
Provide general information	✓	n.a.	n.a.	✓	✓
Provide account-specific information	✓	n.a.	n.a.	✓	✓
Direct clients to the appropriate queues	✓	n.a.	n.a.	✓	
Staff Functions					
Answer general questions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Provide account information	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Conduct initial interviews	s			✓	s
Conduct recertification interviews	s			✓	s
Process changes submitted by callers	✓	✓		✓	✓
Process changes submitted online	✓	✓		✓	
Register online applications[a]		✓			
Conduct backlog casework					✓

Note: Primary functions are marked in the table as "✓" and secondary functions are marked as "s."

[a] This task consists of entering basic information from online applications into the eligibility system, to be processed by staff in local offices.

n.a. = not applicable. (Call centers in Georgia and Massachusetts do not have IVRs, although Massachusetts has a separate IVR not connected to its call center.)

Call centers can serve a variety of other functions. All call agents can answer case-specific questions and, with the exception of Massachusetts, are able to resolve most issues that callers have about SNAP, their specific application, or their case. Call center staff in three states conduct some eligibility and recertification interviews. In Utah, all interviews are conducted by call center staff (since all eligibility workers are assigned to the call center). In Florida and Washington, call center staff conduct some interviews, but the majority are conducted by local office staff.

Often, states use call centers to centralize other tasks as well. Some of these are natural expansions—such as processing changes submitted online in addition to those reported by telephone—whereas others are less related to telephone calls. For example, staff in Georgia's call center are responsible for registering online applications. In Washington, the centralized document imaging unit is located in the same building and overseen by the same administrator as the call center.

Beside call centers, some states established other statewide units to perform centralized functions. For example, Massachusetts developed two regional units to process online applications. In Washington and some areas of Utah, document imaging is conducted in centralized locations.[89] Regionally centralized teams also conduct recertification activities in Washington.

Centralized units are not necessarily physically centralized. Most states' call centers have multiple locations, and agents can telecommute in some states. For example, with Utah's centralization of staff into a virtual call center, eligibility workers are now physically based in one of four physical call centers—in work spaces in some local employment offices—or telecommute from

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[89] Florida was planning to consolidate document imaging at the state level in preparation for planned privatization of this function.

home. Florida adopted telecommuting as a way to reduce office space costs and, at least initially, it was seen as a reward for the most productive workers. As the practice has expanded, however, and is now mandatory in some locations in Florida, staff reactions are mixed. Utah is no longer expanding telecommuting, in part because of the expense and complexity of providing technology support to staff in their homes.

Specialization within local offices. In four of the case study states (all but Utah), modernization also brought an increase in specialization of staff functions within local offices. Although specific changes vary by state, the general shift is away from the traditional caseworker model, in which a single worker owns a case from application for as long as the household remains on SNAP, to a process model, in which different staff focus on different tasks in the certification and case management processes. In some states, the degree of specialization and the specific division of tasks varies across offices.

The most common type of specialization of tasks in local offices is a division between intake—processing initial applications—and ongoing cases. Staff in at least some offices in most case study states specialize in this way. Other examples of task divisions include specializing in online or paper applications, or specializing in interviews or other eligibility determination activities. In some locations, the staff person who first touches an application will complete the certification process if he or she can, but if not—for example, if the staff member cannot reach the client for a telephone interview or has not received a necessary verification document—then the case moves to another worker for the next step in the process.

Although the specific tasks that are centralized or specialized vary by state, staff in all study states believed that the increased specialization increased efficiency, allowing fewer staff to handle growing caseloads. Call centers and other centralized units relieve local office of responsibility for certain tasks—such as processing changes or imaging documents—so that they can focus on other eligibility and case management activities. Whether centralized or distributed among local offices, focusing on a particular task allows specialized staff to build expertise in that area, which may enable them to perform better and faster over time.

2)   Expanding Uses of Technology

The most common technological enhancement among the study states is the development of various online tools for client access. In all five states, households can submit applications for SNAP benefits online and create accounts to check their case from any device with an Internet connection. In four of the five states, clients can also report changes and recertify online. Table VII.3 summarizes the online functions available across states. In addition to providing options that many clients find convenient, online applications and accounts can ease the burden on staff. Data entered into online applications feeds directly into eligibility systems in some states, reducing the time staff spend on data entry. Online accounts allow clients to obtain information about their case and even report changes without requiring the attention of staff.

Table VII.3. Online Application and Account Functions Across Study States

	Florida	Georgia	Massachusetts	Utah	Washington
Online Eligibility Screening Tool	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Online Application	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ability to save incomplete application for later session	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Electronic signature	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ability to check application status	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
List of Community Partners	✓	pilot			
Online Account Functionality					
Current benefit amount	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Benefit history	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Documents submitted	✓			✓	
Verifications needed	✓				
Report Changes	✓	✓		✓	✓
Upload Documents	✓	pilot			
Recertify Online	✓	✓		✓	✓
Email/Text Notification of Account Changes or New Notices Available	✓			✓	

IVR systems enable clients to complete some tasks by telephone without speaking to an agent. Massachusetts has a stand-alone IVR system accessible through a toll-free number that provides basic information about the program and the client's application (for recent applicants) or case (for active clients). In three other states, IVRs are part of the call center, as shown in Table VII.2. In addition to providing similar types of information as the system in Massachusetts, two of these states' IVRs route calls to the appropriate call agent group based on the information provided by the caller.

Other common technological enhancements make it easier for staff to do their jobs. New or updated computer systems or software tools used by staff range from user-friendly interfaces in Florida and sortable task lists aligned with the new process-based staffing structure in Washington to the new rules-based eligibility systems in Massachusetts and Utah. In all case study states, at least some data entered by clients into online applications is automatically fed into the eligibility system. Some states have also developed back-end tools that link different systems (such as eligibility, application, and data verification) or that help staff manage workloads. For example, one module developed for Florida's management system automatically assigns work to staff across offices, whereas some office managers in Georgia—which had restructured staff more recently—struggled without such tools.

Two closely related activities that are somewhat less common but seen as critical in some states are document imaging and electronic case records. Utah considers electronic case records an essential precursor to its centralized restructuring—so much so that the state delayed its restructuring until electronic records were in place. Georgia was piloting document imaging at the time of the data collection, and staff eagerly anticipated the expected roll-out. Portability of case records is necessary to equalize case loads, which was a key goal for some states.

3)   Policy Simplifications

All study states implemented a variety of policy simplifications designed to reduce barriers to access, burden on staff, and error rates. One key policy change adopted by all five states was obtaining a waiver of the face-to-face interview requirement. This change meant that clients no longer had to come to an office for an interview at either initial application or recertification, but

could instead complete their interviews by telephone. Widespread use of telephone interviews facilitated administrative restructuring, and the resulting efficiencies, because interviewers no longer must be located in local offices close to applicants. Reducing the number of local offices or shifting all eligibility workers to a virtual call center as Utah did, would have been more difficult—if not impossible—without telephone interviews and other tools that reduce the necessity for in-person contact between clients and SNAP staff.

The process by which clients and staff connect for their telephone interviews differs by state. In Utah, for example, most clients called in for their interviews, whereas in most study states, eligibility staff typically called clients, at least initially. In Washington, clients contacted the call center, were placed into a telephone interview queue, and received a call back from an eligibility worker within two hours. Each method has drawbacks: staff often found that clients were not at home or telephone numbers had been disconnected, and clients often had long waits to reach busy staff or had trouble getting through on a limited number of lines. However, before telephone interviews were available, missed appointments and long waits in offices were challenges.

Other policy changes simplified eligibility requirements, including expanding categorical eligibility, excluding certain types of income or assets, using standard deductions, and reducing the verification requirements. The specifics of the policy changes vary considerably by state, but taken together, these types of simplifications eased the eligibility process for both clients and staff. One notable example, initiated in three of the five study states, was creating a Combined Application Project (CAP) with SSA, which automatically enrolls elderly and disabled SSI recipients in SNAP without even requiring them to complete an application. As discussed in Chapter IV, the number of new cases entering the SNAP rolls through Massachusetts' CAP created large spikes in program entrants in those months. In 2011, 7 percent of active cases in Massachusetts and 4 percent in Florida had entered SNAP though the CAP.

After a client had enrolled in SNAP, simplified reporting policies reduced the types of changes in circumstances that clients were required to report during their certification period in all five states, and some lengthened the certification period. These policy changes eased the burden on clients and staff throughout the case's lifecycle.

4) Partnering with Community Organizations

Four of the five case study states (all but Utah) created formal networks of community partners, as shown in Table VII.4. Community organizations commonly provided outreach and information about SNAP, assisted in the application process, and answered clients' questions to the best of their ability.[90] Besides improving access for populations and individuals who may not easily access benefits on their own, knowledgeable partners can reduce burden on SNAP staff by assisting clients. The roles partners play in the SNAP process were generally similar across states, and the roles of partners included in formal networks were not greatly different from those of other community organizations without formal partnership arrangements with the state agency. However, the size of the partnership networks and the types of supports provided to formal partners differ.

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[90] Some states have different tiers of partners, based on the level of assistance provided. Most commonly, levels depend on whether a partner has staff available to help a client apply online or simply provides access to paper applications and/or self-service equipment.

Table VII.4. Formal Community Partners, Roles, and Types of Arrangements Across Study States

	Florida	Georgia	Massachusetts	Utah	Washington
Number of Community Partners					
Total Formal Community Partners	3,344	26	187[a]	0	685
Community Partner Activities					
Answer General SNAP Questions or Provide Referrals	All	Most	All	0	All
Distribute Paper Applications	All	Most	Most	0	Most
Provide Online Application Access	Most	Most	All	0	Some
Make Fax Machine, Copier, or Scanner Available for Clients	Most	Most	Some	0	Some
Provide Application Assistance	Most	Most	All	0	Some
Conduct Interviews[b]	Few	0	0	0	0
Contracting Arrangements					
Number of Compensated Partners	75	8	14[c]	0	69[d]
Compensation Method	Varies	50% reimbursement	45% reimbursement	NA	Based on number of applications

Note: Data as of early 2012.

[a] The total number of community partners is derived from data on the number of partners who submitted an application online from June 2010 to April 2011.

[b] Interviews are conducted by partners in Florida only, under a demonstration project.

[c] Massachusetts plans to expand to 22 compensated partners in FY 2013.

[d] Washington has 10 primary compensated partners with 59 subcontractors.

NA = not available.

The key change under modernization was the variety of supports that states provided to their partners, rather than the roles community organizations played.[91] States can provide a wide range of supports, from monetary or in-kind compensation to training and information. The four states with formal partnership networks each provided some level of financial support—typically federal funding passed through the state agency—to at least some partners, but the number of compensated partners and the basis of compensation varied. For example, some partners in Florida, Georgia, and Massachusetts received reimbursement to cover about half of their costs for educating clients about SNAP. In Washington, compensation for outreach partners shifted from a cost reimbursement model to a performance-based model, under which the fees paid to community organizations are based on the numbers of applications submitted and approved.

State SNAP agencies also provided training and information to help community organizations better serve their shared clients. In Florida, each circuit had at least one full-time staff person designated to serve as community partner liaison, a role that includes recruitment, training, monitoring, and answering partners' questions—about SNAP in general or even specific clients'

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[91] One notable exception is a pilot project in Florida, which expanded the role of select partners (seven, as of 2012) to include conducting interviews.

cases. Washington assigned partners to a regional community partner coordinator, who answered questions and served as the organization's main point of contact with the agency. Georgia had a single statewide staff person who provided support directly to umbrella partners, which in turn supported their subsidiary partners. Because assisting clients in completing the online application was a key role for many partners, it was a focus of training in some states—Massachusetts provided training to partners on the Virtual Gateway and (despite the lack of formal partnership structure) Utah trained some community organization staff on third-party access to online accounts. Another type of support provided to partners was access to their clients' account information. Authorized partners in most study states were able to view the application status (and, in some states, benefit information) for the clients they assisted, and Washington was considering granting outreach partners more access to client information.

b.   Pervasiveness of Changes, from the Clients' Perspective

Modernization increased the number of self-service options available to clients in all case study states. Some changes also resulted in less personal attention, particularly in-person interaction between staff and clients. New options, such as online applications, reduced the need for clients to come to SNAP offices. In four of the five case study states (Massachusetts is the exception), more than half of all SNAP applications were submitted online. Clients could also check their accounts, report changes, and recertify online. Interviews by telephone were even more pervasive in most states, though less so in Massachusetts. Still, paper applications and in-person interviews were available, at least upon request.

Some other changes were less optional for clients. In many locations, clients no longer had an assigned caseworker who followed their case from application through the lifecycle. Even in the two study states where cases were owned by a specific worker, clients were likely to interact with others at some points. In Massachusetts, staff in some offices were divided between intake and ongoing cases, so the person who processed the application passed the case to a different worker for recertification (although that worker then kept the case through all subsequent recertifications). In Utah, a client's call could be answered by any member of the caseworker's team.

Shorter interviews and less frequent interviews also resulted in less time interacting with a caseworker. Interviews occurred less frequently in some states than before modernization due to policy changes that lengthened certification periods and/or required interviews to be conducted only at alternate certifications. Although many clients found such changes convenient, others miss the greater degree of personal attention.

In some places, there is no longer a nearby office location for clients to seek out SNAP staff. Florida closed more than half of its local offices from 2004 to 2012 and Washington closed a smaller number of local offices to consolidate operations and save on facilities costs. In Utah, no eligibility staff remain in local offices.

Reaching SNAP staff by telephone is also more difficult now. As discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, limited numbers of lines at both call centers and local offices resulted in frequent busy signals, and even those calls that got through could have long hold times.

2.   Changes in Outcomes Across States

a.   SNAP Access: Caseloads Grew Across All States

The number of households receiving SNAP benefits has increased in all case study states since they began to modernize their SNAP operations. Most of this increase occurred after the onset of the economic downturn in 2008, likely due to increases in the unemployment and poverty rates. The impact of modernization cannot easily be disentangled from the effects of the recession. However, the rise in caseloads at least suggests that modernization changes did not trigger major disruptions in SNAP access.

The Program Access Index (PAI) also increased in all case study states from 2005 to 2010 (Figure VII.1). Although the PAI also increased nationwide, four of the five states (all but Georgia) improved their position in FNS's ranking of states based on PAI. Both Utah and Washington were ranked in the top 10 in 2010.

Figure VII.1. Trends in SNAP Program Access Index Across Study States, 2005–2010
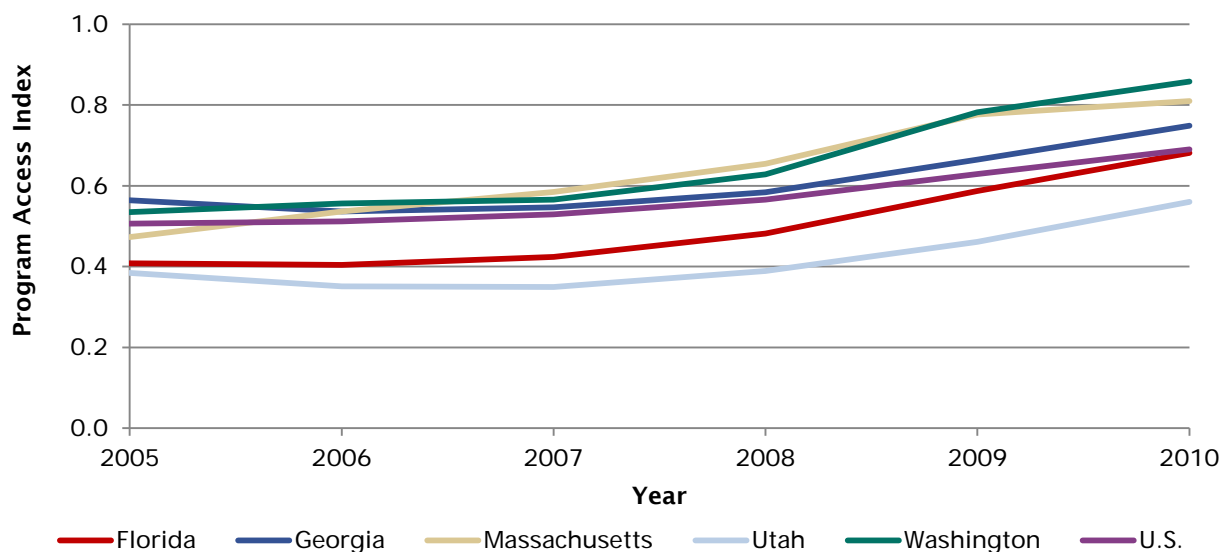
Source: PAI data are from the USDA, FNS.

Note: PAI, a measure calculated by FNS, represents a ratio of the average monthly number of SNAP participants over the course of a calendar year to the number of state residents with incomes below 125 percent of the federal poverty level. A higher PAI indicates greater program access.

Despite concerns among some stakeholders that particular vulnerable populations—such as the elderly, disabled, and certain minority groups—might struggle with the new systems introduced by modernization, the study found little evidence of adverse consequences on program access for any subgroup of interest. Across states, the demographic characteristics of the SNAP population remained fairly stable throughout the study period. One exception was a decrease in the proportion of recipients ages 60 or older in Florida. Although the number of SNAP heads of household in this age group doubled from 2005 to 2011, caseload growth among younger households was even greater. This trend might be due to growing unemployment during the recession, but it is also possible that some modernization initiatives promoted access more effectively among younger adults and/or that the office closures disproportionately affected older population.

Consistent with caseload growth, the number of SNAP applications submitted rose, particularly after 2008. Again, changing economic conditions generally preclude tying the increase in applications to modernization. However, one particular initiative in Massachusetts did cause notable spikes in new SNAP cases in certain months: the first phase of Massachusetts' CAP with SSI approximately tripled the number of new applicants in two months of 2005.

b. Application Timeliness: Processing Time Varied Over Time and by Submission Method

Trends in the amount of time between applications submission and eligibility determination were more likely due to patterns in the numbers of applications submitted—and the lack of commensurate changes in the number of staff to process them—rather than any modernization initiative. In one state, however, application processing time seemed to suffer during a period of transition. The percentage of applications processed within the required time frame fell markedly in Utah during the period of most significant technological and administrative changes, which coincided with the sharpest increase in application submissions in that state, before returning to near normal levels (Figure VII.2).

Figure VII.2. Average SNAP Application Processing Timeliness Across Study States, 2000–2011
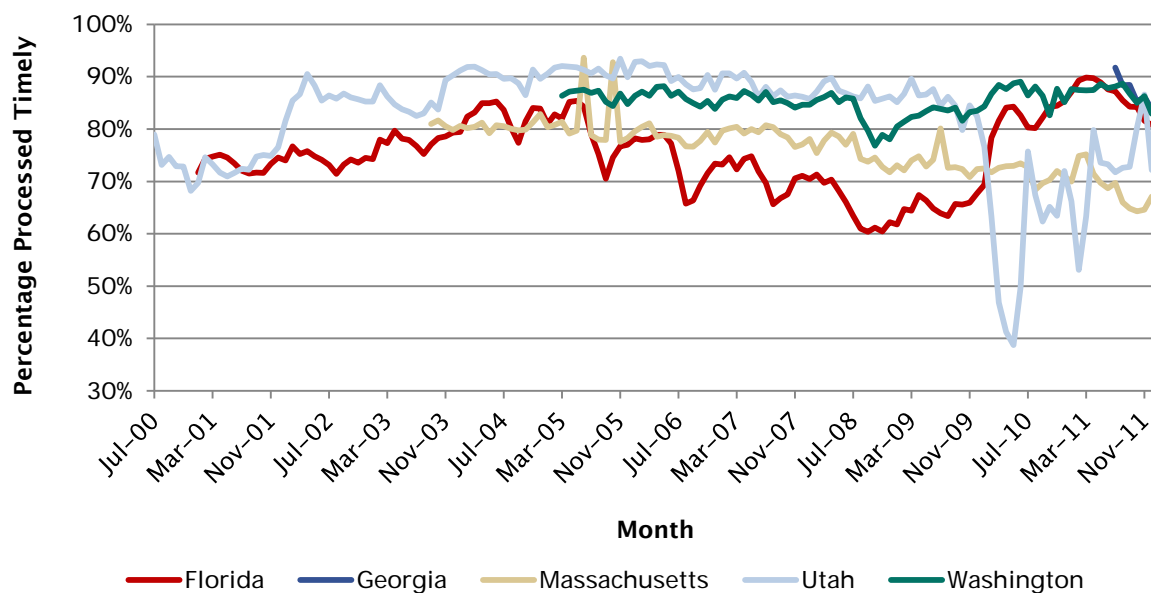
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by state SNAP agencies.

Note: The months covered by the data provided by state SNAP agencies varied across states. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and 30 days for all other applications. Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files. The results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application data provided do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications are included in our calculation of timeliness.

In some states, application processing times differed depending on how the application was submitted. In Florida, Georgia and Massachusetts, applications completed online tended to have longer processing times than those submitted in the traditional way. The difference was particularly stark in Massachusetts, where fewer than half of online applications were processed timely in 2011.

In Florida and Georgia, the difference in timeliness between online and paper applications was only three and seven percentage points, respectively. Although administrative records data on this topic are not available in the other two case study states, stakeholders interviewed in Washington reported that online applications took longer to process there as well, due in part to the state's efforts to provide same-day service to clients who came to SNAP offices. In Massachusetts, longer processing time was related to the different procedures followed for online applications. When an application is submitted online, rather than in person, staff often must contact the applicant by telephone to confirm key information or request verification documents—tasks that would be addressed at the time of application when a client applies in person. In addition, state policy does not allow self-declaration of information submitted via online application, resulting in more items having to be verified, relative to paper applications.

c. Application Approval Rates: Varied by Submission Method

Although overall application approval rates showed no clear pattern across the five states (Figure VII.3), approval rates did vary by submission method. Approval rates were lower for applications submitted online in two of the three states for which administrative data on method of application are available, although this was not the case in Florida. The difference is smaller in Georgia (18 percentage points) than in Massachusetts (32 percentage points). The ease of applying online rather than at a SNAP office, along with reduced social stigma, might encourage more people who are not actually eligible to complete an application. In addition, some staff noted that some online applicants might not understand the full application process and fail to provide necessary verification or complete their interviews before the deadline, resulting in a denial.

Figure VII.3. Approval Rate of SNAP Applications by Month Across Study States, 2000–2011
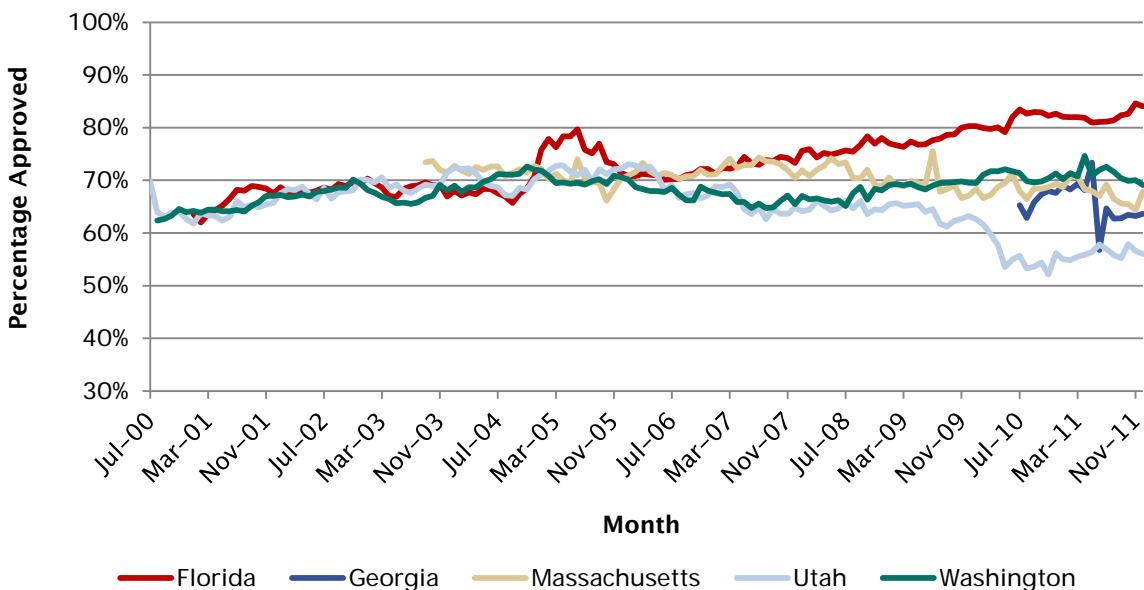
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by state SNAP agencies.

Note: The months covered by the data provided by state SNAP agencies varied across states.

d. Contact Points: New Options, Particularly Online Applications and Call Centers, Utilized by Clients

The modernization process has altered how clients interact with SNAP, by shifting the focus away from local offices as the sole or primary point for obtaining information and assistance. Large and growing numbers of households in the five case study states take advantage of alternative means of access to services, most commonly online applications and accounts, call centers, and partnership networks.

Online options. Online applications are among the most popular new point of access. By 2011, in four of the five study states, the majority of applications were completed online, rather than in paper form. Although, as noted previously, some of these online applicants were determined to be ineligible for SNAP benefits, most approved applications in these states were also completed online. Although the method of application was not included in the monthly records data collected from Utah or Washington, staff in Utah reported that virtually all applications were submitted online, either from SNAP offices or other locations; Washington staff reported that 55 percent of applications were submitted online in early 2012. In Florida, approximately 90 percent of applicants applied online in 2011, up from 76 percent five years earlier. At the opposite end of the range is Massachusetts, where 22 percent of applications were submitted online. The different rates of online applications correlate to some extent with the degree to which state staff encourage its use. In Florida, Utah, and Washington, clients who came to a SNAP office in person to apply were typically directed to a computer in the lobby. The lower rate of applying online in Massachusetts was likely also related to the state's different policies and procedures regarding online applications. As noted earlier, state policy in Massachusetts did not allow self-declaration of information submitted via online application, so clients must submit more verification documents. This, along with different procedures for handling online applications, resulted in longer processing times relative to paper applications. Focus group respondents in both Massachusetts and Washington noted the differing processing time as key reasons for applying in person. In Washington, however, most clients who came to a local office for same-day service actually completed the application online at a computer in the office lobby. Although stakeholders reported increased utilization of other types of online access, such as clients checking their accounts and reporting changes online, data are not consistently available on the number of households using these options.

Community partners. Although community partners can help to reach underserved populations, the available data suggest that only a small minority of applications were submitted directly through community organizations. In 2011, approximately 7 percent of applications submitted in Florida and 4 percent of those in Massachusetts were submitted online at partner locations. In Washington, approximately 2 percent of applications in 2010 were submitted by partners. However, these are lower-bound estimates of the total numbers of clients assisted by partners for two main reasons. First, paper applications completed with the assistance of partners were not included in the counts for Florida and Massachusetts (because neither state was able to track data on assistance with paper applications). This was especially an issue in Massachusetts, because, as noted earlier, the vast majority of applications were submitted in paper form in that state. Second, in all states, there were other ways that partners could assist beside in submitting applications. For example, partners could provide SNAP information and outreach to their clients who were unfamiliar with the program, equipment to use in copying and faxing verification documents to SNAP eligibility staff, and assistance in reading and understanding notices received from the SNAP agency. None of the states in the study was able to count the numbers of clients assisted in these ways, although the numbers of organizations in their partnership networks (totaling more than 4,000 across the study states, as shown in Table VII.4) might be instructive.

In addition to the overall numbers served, stakeholders suggested that community partners can be instrumental in reaching particular populations that would not apply for SNAP on their own. These include some new immigrant populations, particularly those with limited English skills and/or low literacy levels, tribal populations, and other groups that might have a general mistrust of government agencies. Partners could also be particularly helpful to other groups that might require more personal attention than is provided under the increasing focus on self-service of some states' modernization initiatives, such as the elderly. Clients who do not require special outreach or assistance, however, might consider community organizations to be an unnecessary additional step. The needs of many applicants were adequately addressed by SNAP agencies directly, leading many partners to focus on specific underserved groups.

CAPs. CAPs bring large numbers of elderly and disabled SSI recipients to SNAP. In Florida, 4 percent of all active cases in 2011 had been enrolled through the state's CAP (although it was not introduced as part of Florida's modernization efforts). Massachusetts' CAP brought twice as many households to SNAP in two months in 2005 as all other SNAP applicants combined, when the program began. (Data are not available on the number of CAP clients in Washington, the other case study state with a CAP.)

Call centers. SNAP clients used call centers extensively. Even the limited-function call center in Massachusetts handled up to 10,000 calls per month, and call centers with broader functions in other states can receive more than that in a single day. In 2011, Georgia's call center staff logged more than 3,000 calls a day on average, and more than 15,000 calls reached a call agent in Florida, the most populous state in the study. In Utah, where all eligibility staff are call center staff, call volume averaged more than 5,000 calls per day in 2011.

Across states, call volume has increased with caseload growth, outpacing capacity. This has resulted in busy signals or dropped calls when the number of callers exceeds the number of available telephone lines (Figure VII.4), and sometimes lengthy wait times even for those who do get through (Figure VII.5). In 2011, fewer than half of calls to Florida's and Georgia's call centers got through to an agent (although the proportion of calls answered varied across months). Average wait times among callers reaching the call center that year ranged from 6 minutes in Washington to 22 minutes in Georgia. However, those calling during peak hours could encounter substantially higher than average hold times. Although states consider the lengthy wait times a challenge, the fact that clients are willing to wait on hold for so long indicates that they prefer it to the alternative, which in most states is the only option that was available before modernization: traveling to a local SNAP office. Still, many clients in Massachusetts and Washington felt that the best, fastest way to be served was to go into a local office.

Figure VII.4. Percentage of Calls Answered by Call Center Agents Across Study States, 2004–2011
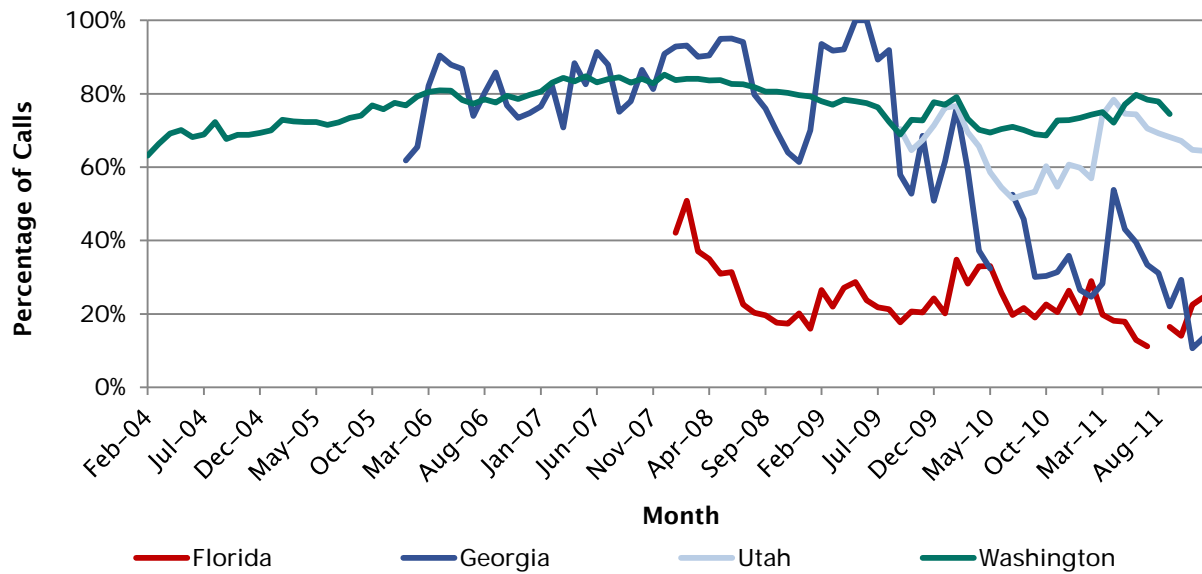
Note: The months covered by the data provided by state SNAP agencies varied across states.

Figure VII.5. Average Call Center Wait Times Across Study States, 2004–2011
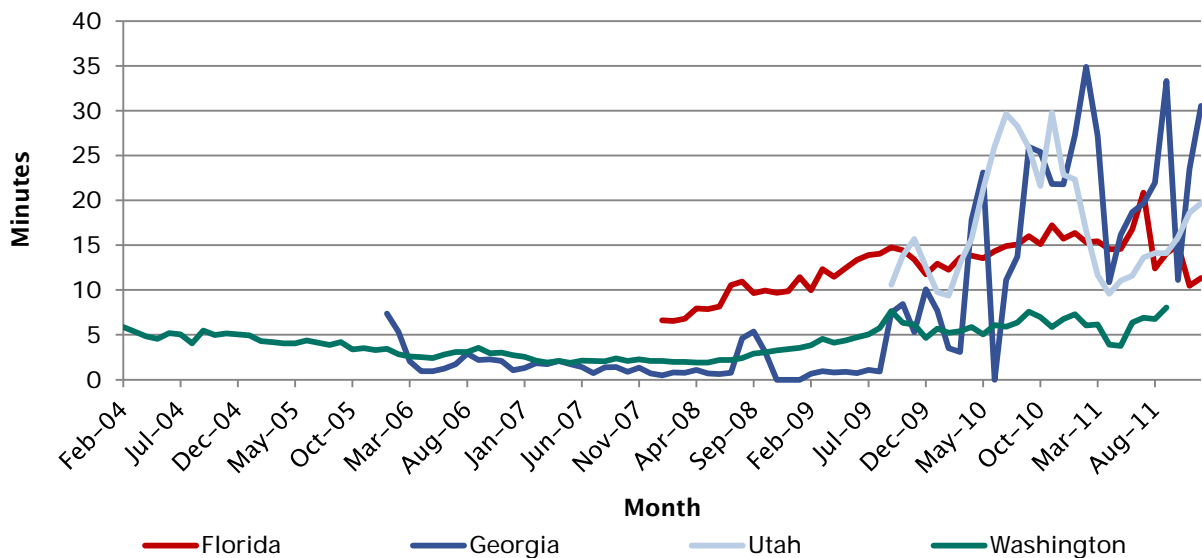
Note: The months covered by the data provided by state SNAP agencies varied across states.

Satisfaction. Clients' satisfaction with these modernization changes was mixed. Many clients found the self-service options convenient; others preferred the greater personal contact of the traditional caseworker model. Those who used the online application and accounts tended to be satisfied with the process and appreciated not having to travel to a local office in person. However, as noted earlier, some clients preferred submitting paper applications—either because they would be processed faster in some states or due to low levels of comfort with computers.

Some clients clearly preferred the traditional in-person case management approach, in which a single caseworker is assigned to a case for its duration. Staff in Georgia estimated that about half of its clients—particularly those who had received SNAP for a long time and those living in rural areas—felt that way; the other half were satisfied with the new structure. Focus group participants in Massachusetts appreciated having one point of contact in the local office who was responsible for and familiar with their case, and clients in Utah complained about having to speak to a different eligibility worker each time. Clients in Washington appreciated the improved timeliness and recognized that being seen by the next available worker expedited the local office experience considerably, but they still missed the traditional caseworker model.

Across states, clients were frustrated by the difficulty getting through to staff at call centers or local offices. Long wait times and sometimes being disconnected were common complaints. However, at least some clients acknowledged that being able to complete interviews and other tasks by telephone relieved them of the greater burden of traveling to and waiting at an office, and many also recognized the increase in demand created by the recession.

e.   Error Rates: SNAP QC Payment Errors Trended Downward Across All States

Payment error rates decreased nationwide and in all study states over the past decade (Figure VII.6). Although some modernization initiatives were designed, at least in part, to reduce errors, and others might increase them, there is no clear evidence across states of impacts in either direction. Stakeholders note that specialization enabled staff to focus on a particular aspect of the SNAP process, potentially increasing their expertise in that task and thus reducing errors. Additionally, policy simplifications that reduced the number of criteria to be assessed and the amount of documentation required might reduce the opportunities for staff to make errors. On the other hand, some eligibility workers suspected that telephone interviews and the reduced contact with clients could compromise the quality of information reported. What is clear is that error rates across the nation are declining. The extent to which this national trend was influenced by common policy changes, modernization changes in some states, or other factors cannot be determined in this study.

Figure VII.6. Trends in SNAP QC Payment Error Rate Across Study States, 2000–2010
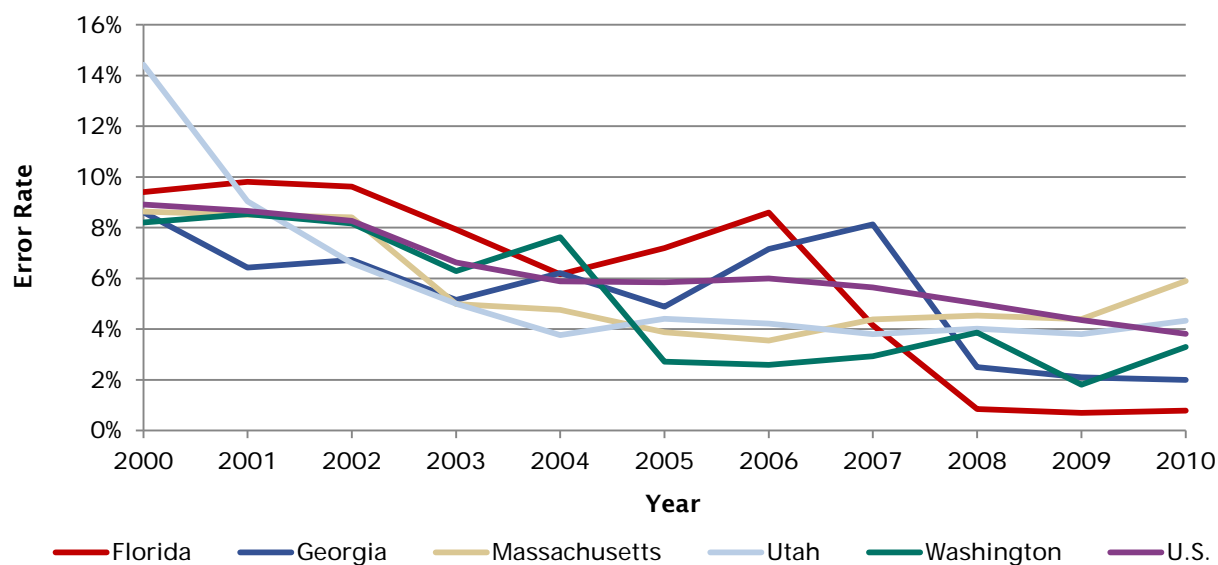
Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

f.   Administrative Costs: Per Case Costs Declined Across All States

Average monthly administrative costs per case declined in all case study states, and nationwide, from 2001 to 2011. Figure VII.7 shows the state's share of total monthly administrative costs across this period. These declines were driven in part by growing caseloads, because fixed costs—such as the development and maintenance of various technological tools—were spread across a larger number of cases.[92] Cost reductions might also reflect efficiencies resulting from modernization. Although it is impossible to disentangle these effects, costs per case declined more in each case study state than the national average.

Figure VII.7. Percentage Change in Average Monthly Costs per Case from 2000 Baseline, Across Study States, 2000–2011 (2005 dollars)

Source: Mathematica tabulations of average monthly costs and average monthly caseloads from the USDA, FNS. Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

In all study states, certification costs—the costs associated with processing applications and determining eligibility at certification and recertification periods—were by far the single largest component cost category, accounting for from 59 to 82 percent (across years and states) of the state's share of all administrative costs. However, trends in certification costs per case differed by state, declining in Florida and to a lesser extent in Washington, but rising in the other three study states—although less than nationwide.

g.   SNAP Staff: Shifting Roles Helped Staff Handle Rising Caseloads, but Satisfaction Mixed

Staffing changes were one likely driver of falling costs in some states. With the exception of Massachusetts, all case study states experienced staff reductions over the study period. In most

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[92] Fixed costs might also explain why Utah's costs are higher than other states, because Utah has fewer total cases but might face similar fixed costs as other states.

cases, the reduction was due to attrition; only Florida experienced layoffs. In that state in 2003 and in Utah in 2010, reductions in staff were mandated by the state legislatures. In response, the SNAP agencies reduced staff by more than 40 percent in Florida (over three years) and by 10 percent in Utah in one year. In Georgia and Washington, hiring freezes drove decreasing staffing levels, and uneven turnover rates across the state (local offices in urban areas experienced higher turnover rates than rural offices) resulted in uneven distribution of burden across offices. Because these changes were concurrent with the recession in most states, numbers of SNAP cases increased as staffing levels contracted, exacerbating the impact of the staff cuts on burden. Even in Massachusetts— where the number of staff increased (but at a slower pace than SNAP caseloads)—respondents considered inadequate staffing levels to be among the most pressing issues facing the agency. Staff in Georgia suggested that the stress of high caseloads increased staff turnover, further compounding the problem.

Although the recession, rather than modernization, was the cause of staffing cuts in some states, modernization played a role in reducing burden on the remaining staff. Across states, stakeholders reported that the package of changes implemented—particularly administrative restructuring and policy simplifications—had been necessary to enable them to handle the increased volume of cases. In Massachusetts, for example, one worker reported job satisfaction had been "2 out of 10" before the intake/ongoing split but was "9 out of 10" afterward; the only location visited in that state where the issue of staff burden was not raised was one of the two offices that had restructured eligibility functions early. A supervisor in Utah noted that, "If we had to do business the old way, we would have bankrupted the state."

Although staff were unanimous in feeling overwhelmed by rising caseloads, their reactions to modernization were mixed. Despite the prevailing sentiment in most states that they could not have handled the caseload increases under the old system, some staff disliked certain aspects of modernization. The decrease in extended personal contact with a consistent set of clients and the loss of the "social worker" aspect of the job was the most common complaint. In contrast with states where key modernization initiatives were relatively new, staff in Florida who remained with the SNAP agency years after the major changes began reported having grown accustomed to both the specific changes made and to the idea of ongoing change.

Other specific points of dissatisfaction with modernization processes were raised by staff in fewer states. For example, staff in at least two states expressed frustrations with implementing changes before requisite technology supports were implemented. Staff in some places felt that major changes were implemented too quickly and too frequently. Others noted dissatisfaction with the level and clarity of communication about new procedures and policy changes. Some even expressed concerns that this lack of clarity, along with lax training of new eligibility workers, could result in inconsistent application of policies and procedures by their colleagues. Complaints about decreased flexibility were common in at least one state.

B. Conclusions

The experiences of the five case study states can provide informative lessons for other states to consider in planning and implementing their own SNAP modernization initiatives. The challenges encountered can provide advance warning of potential pitfalls other states should prepare for—and perhaps identify ways to avoid—whereas successes attained might suggest paths to follow. This section presents key challenges and successes in turn, followed by additional lessons learned in the analysis of the experiences of the case study states.

1.   Implementation Challenges

The five case study states encountered a number of challenges in their efforts to modernize SNAP operations.

- **Call center volume.** Call centers struggled to handle the volume of calls. Across states, one of the most common complaints voiced by client focus group members was about difficulty reaching the call center. Queue limitations resulted in many callers not getting through (despite increased numbers of lines in some states), and those who did get through typically waited on hold (although average hold times were longer in some states than others). Still, some respondents noted that waiting on the telephone could be a preferable alternative to waiting in an office. Additionally, staff reported patterns in wait times based on time and day, suggesting that communicating to clients when the shorter than average wait times typically are (or increasing staff during the longest wait times, if possible) could help. Because increases in call volume were often concurrent with staffing cuts or hiring freezes, increasing staff was not typically feasible. Instead, states developed online alternatives to provide answers to questions or accept reports of changes in circumstances. Utah encouraged clients to use the state's online chat feature.

- **Need for communication.** Clients, community partners, and even staff noted that clear effective communication about modernization changes was sometimes lacking. Staff in Georgia were aware of problems with the clarity of the notices generated by the state's eligibility system, but making changes to the mainframe system was time-consuming, expensive, and competed with other priorities. Even when SNAP agencies believed they were releasing adequate information, clients sometimes did not get the message—either because notices were confusing or they went unread. This can lead to frustration and even loss of benefits if a miscommunication results in a client not providing all the information needed for certification.

  Partners could potentially play an important role in helping to get the messages out to clients, if they are adequately informed. Partnership networks developed under modernization provide training and structures through which community organizations can receive answers to questions. Improved communication with clients could also potentially help reduce call volume, given that call centers can be flooded with calls when a major change is implemented that clients do not understand. However, ensuring that clear communication happens consistently with everyone, including partners, requires time and effort.

- **Adjusting to shared responsibility.** The administrative restructuring under modernization often resulted in sharing of caseloads across workers. For example, with a shift from a caseworker to a process model, different staff members conducted specific tasks for the same case. For instance, one person might conduct the interview, but another might make the eligibility determination after receipt of a verification document. This work sharing can reduce the feeling of ownership of a case that existed under the traditional caseworker model, in which a single staff person not only completed all tasks related to the initial certification, but conducted all subsequent recertification activities and changes, through the life of the case. If staff do not completely trust the coworkers with whom they share cases, the resulting anxiety can both hurt morale and cause inefficiencies, as each staff member checks the work done before the case was passed to him or her. Trust might be easier when staff know the people with whom they share cases. For example, in Utah, caseloads were shared within teams of 16 staff, whereas

staff in Washington might work on the same cases as others based in distant parts of the state whom they have never met. Florida's experience suggested that staff can learn to trust one another when they have time to get used to the new processes.

2. Successes

Despite these challenges, evidence from five case study states suggests several areas in which their modernization efforts have been successful.

- **Modernizing enabled staff to handle increasing caseloads.** Although SNAP staff had mixed feelings about some aspects of modernization, most agreed that the administrative restructuring and policy simplifications helped them handle the increased volume of work that came with the recession.

- **Large numbers of clients used new contact points.** Online applications and accounts, telephone interviews, and even call centers were widely used. Community partnership networks and CAPs had a narrower base, but still served notable minorities of SNAP clients, particularly key subgroups. Although the usage rates varied by initiative and state, clients were generally accepting of—and many were enthusiastic about—the variety of ways to interact with SNAP agencies, beside visiting an office in person.

- **Increasing self-service options can reduce burden on staff.** In addition to being more convenient for some clients, self-service options typically resulted in less work for SNAP agency staff. Online applications that feed information directly into the eligibility system reduced the amount of data entry staff must do. Telephone interviews were typically less time-consuming than in-person interviews. Community partners can provide general assistance and online accounts can provide case-specific information, both freeing staff from those tasks.

- **Policy simplifications can be inexpensive** ways to reduce staff burden and barriers to access. Although changes to policies must be clearly communicated to eligibility workers, simplifying policies does not require the capital expenditures or investments of technology upgrades, nor does it involve the same level of disruption as a large-scale administrative restructuring. Reductions in the number of types of income that must be documented were a common example of how a simplification can help—such reductions eased the burden on clients because they did not have to obtain and submit as many documents, and on staff, who did not have to request and process as many documents. Data exchanges were another tool praised by staff in most states to reduce verification documents required of clients.

- **Partners might help reach key subgroups.** Although partners did not necessarily submit large proportions of applications, they can assist those who need more personal attention than was provided under restructured staffing models. Stakeholders reported that partners can be invaluable in providing outreach to particularly hard-to-reach populations. Many community organizations already assist clients with regard to SNAP, but supports from the state can help them do better.

- **Modernization facilitated cost reductions.** Modernization enabled decreasing numbers of staff to handle increasing caseloads. Although reductions in costs per case might have been driven by increased caseloads and hiring freezes, rather than deliberate strategies in some states, the efficiencies realized under modernization were instrumental in enabling the remaining staff to keep up with the rising caseloads.

- **Payment errors did not necessarily increase under modernization.** Although some eligibility workers suspected that the reduced contact with clients might compromise the quality of information reported, QC error rates have fallen in all case study states and nationwide. Specialization enables staff to focus on a particular aspect of the SNAP process and build their expertise in that area. Additionally, policy simplifications could reduce the opportunities for errors.

3. Other Implications for States

Beyond these specific challenges and successes, combining recommendations from respondents in individual case study states with a synthesis of the findings across the five states yields other implications to inform ongoing modernization efforts. Several cross-cutting lessons emerged from our analysis of their experiences.

Modernization is a fluid, evolutionary process. Even in states that began modernizing almost a decade ago, new modernization changes continue to be implemented. Some evolution results from deliberate long-term planning; other changes emerge in a natural progression. Utah implemented initiatives such as document imaging, electronic case records, and regional call centers over the course of 10 years to lay the groundwork for the consolidation of operations that ultimately occurred in 2009. The state now looks toward additional changes, such as partnering with community organizations, which senior staff felt could not be done effectively until the restructuring was complete. Florida's AMS workflow management tool was designed as four modules, the first introduced in 2007, and the last still in development. Online systems for client access are typically developed in stages as well, beginning with an online application, followed by online accounts, whose functionality can gradually expand to facilitate online change reporting, recertification, and so on.

Administrative restructuring also often changes over time. For example, call centers often began as local entities before expanding statewide. In Massachusetts, staff in two offices began the intake/ongoing split before it expanded to other offices across the state. The GROW initiative in Georgia was rolled out with caseload sharing across groups of counties within each region, with an eventual goal of statewide caseload sharing. Staff in Florida spoke of becoming accustomed to the climate of change, as they constantly try new approaches, keeping those that work and changing those that do not.

The sequence of initiatives matters. Modernization changes do not occur in a vacuum, but often operate in tandem with one another, typically across several programs. Some initiatives build upon each other. Others can ease the burden on staff immediately, thus facilitating the implementation of other activities that involve a longer adjustment period. For example, states might find it easier to begin with policy simplifications or partnerships than with statewide restructuring efforts or expensive technological enhancements.

The full benefits of certain initiatives might not be fully realized unless they are packaged with other complementary changes. For example, an online application might be helpful for clients as an alternative point of access, even if it is disconnected from the state's eligibility system. However, it only reduces staff burden if the information that clients enter is automatically transmitted into the eligibility system. Some types of administrative restructuring can be difficult without document imaging and electronic case records, which are key to sharing caseloads across locations. Utah postponed its transition to a call center model for centralizing eligibility operations until electronic case records were in place, and staff in Georgia struggled to distribute work across offices while their

document imaging system was in its pilot phase. New types of work management tools can also be important to facilitating a shift from a caseworker model to a process model.

Consistency must be balanced with flexibility. In designing and implementing new processes, each state must find the right balance between consistency and flexibility to meet its particular needs, goals, and contexts. Because many modernization initiatives involve greater collaboration among staff, often including those from different locations working more closely together, greater consistency in procedures might be necessary than when each office—and, to a lesser extent, each caseworker—operated in relative isolation.

However, a degree of flexibility can be important to adapt procedures to local conditions. Flexibility is also a good way to discover best practices during early implementation and it is necessary for the continued evolution of modernization. In Georgia, for example, each region was intentionally given considerable flexibility to implement the GROW initiative.

Modernization might be harder when caseloads are increasing. Although tough economic times can provide an additional incentive for states to modernize their SNAP operations, changes might be easier to implement in advance, rather than in reaction to a recession. For example, Utah found it difficult to maintain its usual processing timeliness when implementing two major changes just as caseloads increased. The 2008 recession, which increased caseloads and sometimes reduced state staff, was a contextual challenge faced by all five states. This context shaped states' goals and often the specific initiatives implemented at the time, in addition to affecting key outcomes.

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APPENDIX A

DATA COLLECTION

APPENDIX A: DATA COLLECTION

This report discusses a series of in-depth case studies on each of five states: **Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, Utah,** and **Washington.** As described in Chapter I of the report, the data we analyzed consist of both primary data (from interviews, on-site observations, and focus groups) and extant data (from states' administrative records and federal cost and quality control [QC] data). This appendix describes the data collection and aggregation approach in greater detail, for each type of data.

A. Primary Data

During the period from October 2011 to February 2012, we conducted two separate site visits in each of the participating study states. Over the two visits, we sought a broad perspective on modernization activities in the state. We visited the capital of each state in order to interview senior state agency officials. We then visited a mix of urban and rural localities[1] in multiple regions within each state to capture geographic diversity, as well as diversity in implementation. Site visits consisted of three core data collection activities:

1. **Interviews with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) staff at all levels of the agency, community partners, and other stakeholders.** The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to obtain meaningful insights into the process of implementing modernization initiatives and the potential impacts of these changes. The mix of SNAP staff who were interviewed included state staff; regional, district, and/or county staff; specialized operations unit staff (for example, call center staff); and local office staff.

2. **Tours, demonstrations, and observations of SNAP operations.** We participated in in-person observations in order to see SNAP operations and modernization initiatives at work. This provided a useful perspective on the context in which activities are performed. We toured local offices and specialized units, including call centers, document imaging centers, and online application processing units. We attended demonstrations of various tools, including online application systems, eligibility systems, and online chat functionality. We also observed eligibility workers processing claims and conducting interviews—both face to face and by telephone—and observed the layout of local offices, including the client waiting areas.

3. **Focus groups with clients and potential clients.** We conducted four focus groups in each state in order to examine the clients' perceptions of SNAP, including their opinions about the application and recertification processes, their awareness of and experience with modernization activities, and their level of satisfaction with the program and state agency. Two of the focus groups included a mix of recent participants (individuals who had received SNAP benefits for fewer than three months) and long-term participants (individuals who had received benefits for more than two

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[1] In analyzing extant data for the report, we used a county-level definition of urbanicity. In data tables, then, a county is defined as urban if it contains all or part of a U.S. Census-defined metropolitan statistical area (MSA) and is defined as rural otherwise. However, in selecting locations for site visits, we sometimes identified a rural office within a county that would be categorized as urban, because it contains an MSA. Chapter I of this report describes the sites visited in each state and the rationale for their selection.

years). The remaining two focus groups were conducted with eligible nonparticipants (individuals who were likely eligible for benefits, based on a short screener), which also helped us identify reasons (potential barriers) for not applying for benefits. In Florida and Massachusetts, we conducted two of the focus groups in Spanish, in order to get the perspective of this key population.

Table A.1 provides a summary of the depth and breadth of the interview and focus group data collection efforts. The total number of interviews and focus groups ranged from 33 in Massachusetts and Utah to 42 in Florida; the total number of respondents ranged from 73 in Massachusetts to 149 in Florida.

Table A.1. Summary of On- Site Data Collection Activities, by State

Activity	FL	GA	MA	UT	WA
Total Days on Site	7	6	6	6	7
Site Visit Trips	2	2	2	2	2
Locales Visited	5	6	5	6	7
State–Level Staff					
Number of interviews	5	7	2	4	8
Number of respondents	13	11	2	9	8
Regional, District, or County Administrators					
Number of interviews	15	7	2	0	3
Number of respondents	47	12	2	0	3
Local Offices					
Number visited	7	6	5	5	7
Number of interviews	5	13	15	9	15
Number of managers interviewed	2	7	7	5	7
Number of supervisors interviewed	15	17	4	3	5
Number of frontline staff interviewed	10	24	8	6	7
Specialized Operations Units					
Number visited	3	1	2	4	2
Number of interviews	6	3	4	11	4
Number of managers interviewed	5	6	2	5	1
Number of supervisors interviewed	7	1	1	9	2
Number of frontline staff interviewed	5	5	1	14	3
Partners and Other Stakeholders					
Number of interviews	7	6	6	5	4
Number of respondents	11	12	11	12	4
Focus Groups					
Current SNAP participants					
Number of focus groups	2	2	2	2	2
Number of respondents	19	9	16	20	15
Eligible nonparticipants					
Number of focus groups	2	2	2	2	2
Number of respondents	15	20	19	15	20
Total Number of Interviews and Focus Groups	42	40	33	33	38
Total Number of Respondents	149	124	73	98	75

Notes: A limited number of interviews in some states were conducted via telephone when scheduling constraints prohibited an in person meeting.

Call centers were classified as specialized units in all states. In Utah, this includes all eligibility staff, because all eligibility operations are conducted via the statewide virtual call center.

In Florida, local operations are administered at the circuit level, rather than at the county level. Circuits are composed of from one to seven counties. Circuit administrators may oversee a single local office or all offices in their circuit.

B. Extant Data

In addition to the primary data collected through site visit interviews, in-person observations, and focus groups, we also compiled extant data obtained from the study states and other relevant sources. The extant data helps to document the modernization changes made in each state, identify any trends associated with the implementation of modernization initiatives, and examine whether the modernization changes are potentially driving changes in key program outcomes.

The extant data collected during the course of the study include the following in all states:

- **Monthly administrative case records.** In each state, we requested monthly extracts of administrative case records from several years (Table A.2), to identify participation trends (including any related to each state's modernization) and to help examine any participation patterns related to geography or subgroups. We received data extending through February 2012. However, we excluded data beyond December 2011 from our analyses because, in many states, those last two months represented an incomplete record due to the proximity of the data extraction to the close of the months (without much lag time for states to make typical corrections and updates).

- **Monthly application data.** States typically store their application records separately from their ongoing case records, so we also requested monthly extracts of application files for the same years. These data enable us to examine how the rate of applications changed after implementation of initiatives. Some states were able to provide additional details on their applications, including the method of application. To the extent these were available, application method data can illustrate whether modernization is correlated with how clients access the program.

- **SNAP QC data**. These data, compiled at the federal level from required state submissions, are used to track trends in error rates (under- or overpayments, negative errors). We obtained data for all states for this study, enabling us to compare the case study states with their regions and to the nation over time.

- **Annual administrative cost data.** States must also submit data on administrative costs to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) using form SF-269, which breaks down the costs of administering SNAP into categories. We obtained these data from FNS and used them to identify any trends in the state share of costs over time, whether overall or by category of expenses. We grouped expenditures into cost categories that were used by Logan et al. (2006), with two exceptions: we show QC and outreach costs as separate cost categories, rather than including them both under miscellaneous costs. The SF-269 reports we received from FNS were all in nominal dollars, tabulated on a federal fiscal year (FY) basis, and throughout the report have been adjusted to 2005 dollars using the Bureau of Economic Analysis gross domestic product price deflator.

- **Information on waivers**. Using an FNS database, we documented the timing of policy waiver application, approval, and implementation in state profiles (see Appendix I) before the first round of site visits. Later updates to our information about waivers came from interviews with state staff.

Along with these core data files from each state, we gathered other relevant extant data, when it was available. These other sources include (1) performance data for specific initiatives (for example,

call center, online application, and community partner usage); (2) agency communications, internal presentations, and reports; and (3) other documents with details about state modernization initiatives.

Table A.2 provides a summary of the time frame and frequency of the key extant data collected. As shown, the availability of data varies across the states. In particular, note that the period covered by case record extracts usually runs from July 2000 through December 2011, though data in Georgia and Massachusetts were not available until later dates (2005 and 2003 respectively). Data on initiative-specific outcomes also included a variety of years, varying according to the availability of data on various initiatives in various states.

Table A.2. Periods Covered by Each Type of Extant Data Provided, by State

Extant Data Type	FL	GA	MA	UT	WA
Monthly Case Record Extracts	Jul 2000–Feb 2012	Jan 2005–Feb 2012	Jan 2003–Feb 2012	Jul 2000–Feb 2012	Jul 2000–Feb 2012
Monthly Application Data Extracts	Jul 2000–Feb 2012	Jul 2010–Feb 2012	Jan 2003–Feb 2012	Jul 2000–Feb 2012	Jul 2000–Feb 2012
Data on application mode and source	Jul 2000–Feb 2012	Jul 2010–Feb 2012	Jan 2003–Feb 2012	NA	NA
Other Extant Data					
Call center statistics	Jan 2008-Feb 2012	Jan 2006–Mar 2012	NA	Sep 2009-Mar 2012	Feb 2004-Feb 2012
Document imaging statistics	Sep 2011–Feb 2012	n.a.	n.a.	2009-2012	Jan 2010-Feb 2012
Online application system statistics	Mar 2009–Feb 2012	NA	NA	Mar 2011-Mar 2012	Dec 2010-Feb 2012
Pay-for-performance statistics	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	None	n.a.
Office closures and staff reduction statistics	Jan 2003–Jan 2012, annually (office closures n.a.)	Jul 2011-Feb 2012 (office closures n.a.)	Various months: Sep 2007-Feb 2012	Jul 2009-Apr 2012	Jul 2008 and Jan 2012
Community partner statistics	Mar 2012	2011-2012	June 2010-April 2011	n.a.	FY 2008-FY 2011
Annual administrative cost data	FY 2000-FY 2010	FY 2000-FY 2010	FY 2000-FY 2010	FY 2000-FY 2010	FY 2000-FY 2010

Notes: We originally requested administrative cost data from each state. Later, to ensure consistency across states, we obtained the complete data for all states from FNS for FY 2000 through FY 2010. We received caseload and application data extracts extending through February 2012. But, in developing this report, we excluded data beyond December 2011 from our analyses because in many states these last two months represented an incomplete record due to the proximity of the data extraction to the close of the months (without much lag time for states to make typical corrections and updates).

In Florida, application-level data are incomplete in 2000. Although files from the state cover that year, a large share of 2000 data are missing, so the report does not display results on most variables from 2000.

In Massachusetts, the Department of Transitional Assistance provided us with staffing data for several months within the study time frame, but not on a regular (for example, quarterly or bimonthly) schedule.

In Washington, community partner statistics provided for FY 2011 include three quarters only (October through June).

FY = federal fiscal year.

n.a. = not applicable.

NA = not available.

States collect and store administrative case records and application statistics differently. As such, Mathematica had to make decisions on how best to work with the data consistently across states.

For example, the application data that was provided by some states included recertifications, while other states' application data did not. To treat the data consistently, we removed obvious recertifications from the data for Florida, Massachusetts, and Washington. Specifically, we removed those records where the applicant was included in the previous month's administrative case record file (and had a positive benefit amount). Given the needed manipulation of the data, the reader should use caution when interpreting data results across states.

APPENDIX B

SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES – FLORIDA

Table B.1. Trends in SNAP Participation and Economic Indicators, 2000–2011, Florida

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Average Number of Active Cases per Month (thousands)	432	439	479	517	612	631	621	656	803	1,113	1,484	1,732
Average Number of Individual SNAP Recipients per Month (thousands)	910	907	990	1,068	1,260	1,288	1,239	1,281	1,564	2,155	2,786	3,188
Average Monthly Unemployment Rate (percentage)	3.8	4.7	5.7	5.3	4.6	3.8	3.3	4.0	6.3	10.4	11.3	10.5
Average Number of SNAP Recipients per Person Unemployed	3.0	2.4	2.1	2.5	3.2	3.9	4.2	3.5	2.7	2.3	2.7	3.3
Average Monthly Poverty Rate (percentage)	11.5	11.9	12.6	12.6	12.2	12.8	12.6	12.1	13.2	14.9	16.5	NA
SNAP Program Access Index[a]	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.408	0.404	0.424	0.482	0.587	0.681	NA

Sources: Participation is based on Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF. Unemployment rates are from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Poverty rates from 2004 to 2010 are from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Briefs. Poverty rates from 2000 to 2003 are from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. Program Access Index (PAI) data are from the USDA, FNS.

Note: Data from the Florida DCF begin in July 2000.

[a] PAI, a measure calculated by FNS, represents a ratio of the average monthly number of SNAP participants over the course of a calendar year to the number of state residents with income below 125 percent of the federal poverty level. A higher PAI indicates greater program access.

NA = not available.

Table B.2. Distribution of SNAP Participants, by Characteristic, 2000–2011, Florida

Participant Characteristic	Percentage of Average Monthly Caseload											
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Head- of- Household Characteristics												
Age												
Younger than 18	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	3.1	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.6	4.2	4.5	4.6
18 to 59	66.9	67.2	68.5	69.1	71.3	70.6	69.3	69.3	71.4	75.0	76.8	76.5
60 and older	30.4	30.2	28.7	28.1	25.6	26.0	27.4	27.4	25.0	20.8	18.7	18.8
Race or Ethnicity												
White, not Hispanic	34.7	34.9	34.7	34.4	34.4	34.1	33.7	34.1	35.5	36.8	37.3	37.4
African American, non–Hispanic	32.8	32.3	32.2	32.1	32.0	31.9	31.5	31.4	31.0	30.6	30.7	30.4
Hispanic, all races	29.7	29.9	30.2	30.6	30.5	30.7	31.5	31.2	30.1	29.4	28.6	28.6
Other	2.8	2.8	2.9	3.0	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.7
Disabled	51.7	51.0	48.6	47.3	44.3	44.0	45.4	45.4	43.3	39.4	37.3	36.7
Household Characteristics												
Income												
TANF	11.1	10.0	9.4	8.5	7.0	5.7	4.5	3.6	3.3	3.2	2.5	2.0
Earnings	NA	NA	NA	NA	24.6	24.6	23.5	21.9	22.5	23.1	23.6	24.9
Household Size												
1	50.4	51.9	51.7	52.0	51.9	52.7	54.8	56.9	56.9	56.9	59.0	60.2
2	18.8	18.6	18.8	18.6	18.6	18.3	17.6	16.9	16.9	17.0	16.7	16.4
3	13.5	13.0	13.1	12.9	13.1	12.8	12.2	11.5	11.6	11.7	11.2	10.9
4	9.3	8.9	8.9	8.9	9.0	8.8	8.4	8.0	8.0	7.9	7.4	7.1
5 or more	7.9	7.6	7.5	7.6	7.4	7.3	7.0	6.8	6.6	6.4	5.8	5.3
Benefit Amount[a]												
Less than $20	10.6	11.2	10.8	9.9	8.8	8.3	8.5	8.4	7.2	4.2	3.2	3.8
$20–$50	12.1	12.4	11.6	10.4	9.1	7.1	6.0	7.9	7.8	4.1	3.3	3.7
$51–$100	20.5	19.5	18.9	17.4	15.0	14.7	15.2	14.4	11.9	9.4	7.8	7.7
$101–$150	22.4	23.6	24.2	26.4	30.1	28.1	17.8	16.3	15.3	12.3	9.0	9.4
$151–$200	6.3	5.8	5.8	5.7	5.4	9.6	21.7	22.6	25.5	33.4	41.2	41.9
$201–$250	10.7	10.4	9.6	5.9	5.5	5.2	4.8	4.4	4.1	3.3	3.0	2.9
$251–$300	3.7	3.4	4.6	8.8	9.7	10.0	9.5	9.4	8.2	3.7	3.3	3.3
$301–$350	6.5	5.6	3.6	3.4	3.2	3.0	2.8	2.6	4.4	5.1	3.8	3.6
$351–$400	1.9	2.6	5.0	5.5	6.1	6.5	5.4	2.7	2.5	7.4	8.8	8.3
$401 or more	5.4	5.5	6.0	6.7	7.1	7.6	8.3	11.2	13.0	17.0	16.6	15.4

Participant Characteristic	Percentage of Average Monthly Caseload											
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Length of Current Spell of SNAP Coverage												
Fewer than 6 months	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	32.4	31.4	33.9	35.3	36.4	32.3	29.1
6 months to 1 year	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	21.8	22.1	21.2	22.6	24.4	24.6	22.8
1 to 2 years	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	17.6	17.5	16.3	16.3	16.8	20.7	20.8
2 to 4 years	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	13.7	14.6	14.3	13.2	11.9	13.0	17.1
More than 4 years	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	14.5	14.4	14.3	12.6	10.5	9.5	10.2

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Notes: Data begin in July 2000.

Data in the top portion of the table represent heads of households rather than all individual SNAP recipients. Historical data at the individual level are unavailable in Florida.

[a] The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act authorized increased SNAP benefit amounts effective in April 2009, so increases from 2008 to 2009 and from 2009 to 2010 are expected.

TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. NA = not available.

Table B.3. SNAP Participant Growth Rates, 2000–2011, Florida

Participant Characteristic	Average Monthly SNAP Participant Growth (Percent)											
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Head- of- Household Characteristics												
All SNAP Participants	1.1	2.8	12.2	21.2	43.3	47.7	45.5	53.7	88.2	160.7	247.6	305.9
Age												
Younger than 18	0.6	1.9	15.2	24.5	65.3	84.8	80.5	86.1	153.5	306.9	484.6	600.6
18 to 59	1.4	3.4	15.2	25.4	53.1	56.2	51.0	59.5	101.3	192.9	299.9	365.1
60 and older	0.6	1.5	5.4	11.7	20.1	25.9	30.3	38.1	53.9	77.4	112.6	150.4
Race or Ethnicity												
White, non-Hispanic	1.3	3.6	12.3	20.2	42.2	45.6	41.7	51.3	92.9	176.9	274.7	338.1
African American, non-Hispanic	1.1	1.3	10.1	18.4	40.0	43.9	39.9	47.2	78.2	143.0	225.7	275.7
Hispanic, all races	0.8	3.4	13.9	24.3	46.8	52.2	53.7	60.8	90.3	156.9	233.4	289.6
Other	1.6	5.3	17.8	31.9	59.7	72.2	70.2	85.1	126.2	207.3	323.7	435.2
Disabled	0.6	0.9	5.1	10.3	22.4	25.2	27.1	34.5	57.1	97.6	149.5	187.2
Household Characteristics												
All SNAP Households	1.1	2.8	12.2	21.2	43.3	47.7	45.5	53.7	88.2	160.7	247.6	305.9
Income												
TANF	1.2	-7.9	-5.1	-7.4	-9.5	-24.7	-41.4	-49.8	-43.3	-25.6	-20.5	-27.4
Benefit Amount[a]												
Less than $20	-2.7	4.5	10.3	8.9	14.8	11.0	12.7	17.2	23.4	-0.2	2.1	39.8
$20–$50	-4.1	0.2	2.0	-1.4	2.5	-18.0	-31.5	-4.1	14.6	-16.2	-9.5	18.0
$51–$100	0.5	-2.8	2.7	2.0	4.4	5.2	6.9	7.2	8.9	18.3	32.2	51.2
$101–$150	4.4	11.7	24.7	47.2	98.2	91.1	19.1	15.3	32.3	47.9	43.5	75.0
$151–$200	1.3	-4.7	4.6	10.6	24.7	126.8	403.8	455.1	668.0	1294.2	2193.8	2622.1
$201–$250	2.1	1.3	1.8	-32.8	-25.3	-27.9	-33.3	-35.5	-26.2	-18.6	-2.6	12.6
$251–$300	-0.7	-8.0	37.0	183.8	270.4	293.8	266.8	283.3	311.4	152.8	208.5	252.3
$301–$350	5.0	-8.3	-36.1	-34.4	-27.6	-29.1	-34.7	-36.8	32.7	112.8	108.8	134.8
$351–$400	-2.0	39.3	192.4	248.4	353.6	399.6	308.7	120.6	149.9	912.8	1490.7	1657.2
$401 or more	6.2	10.9	31.7	57.9	97.9	118.2	136.2	236.9	376.2	767.0	1022.9	1119.7

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.
Notes: Data begin in July 2000.
Data in the top portion of the table represent heads of households rather than all individual SNAP recipients. Historical data at the individual level are unavailable in Florida.
Growth figures represent the percent change from the first month of data available to the average monthly caseload in each year.
[a] The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act authorized increased SNAP benefit amounts effective in April 2009, so increases from 2008 to 2009 and from 2009 to 2010 are expected.
TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. NA = not available.

Table B.4. Growth in SNAP Caseload, by Region and County Characteristics, 2000–2011, Florida

	Average Monthly SNAP Caseload Growth (Percent)											
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Statewide	1.1	2.8	12.2	21.2	43.3	47.7	45.5	53.7	88.2	160.7	247.6	305.9
Northwest	3.4	4.6	8.0	11.6	25.2	29.1	23.2	31.9	70.2	131.6	190.3	223.6
Northeast	1.5	4.3	15.8	24.3	50.5	57.9	63.2	72.7	111.0	192.4	289.1	347.9
Central	2.0	4.1	15.9	27.2	52.2	53.7	48.9	59.6	100.8	192.3	302.6	380.4
SunCoast	0.9	4.8	17.1	30.0	59.4	60.2	53.9	70.7	124.6	229.8	350.3	424.5
Southeast	0.4	3.6	15.7	25.9	54.2	69.1	67.8	72.2	111.2	191.8	313.2	400.2
Southern	0.2	-0.4	5.8	12.1	27.2	30.9	30.0	32.7	48.4	87.5	133.1	166.7
County Characteristics[a]												
Rural counties	2.1	3.1	8.0	11.5	27.3	28.8	25.9	34.4	67.7	126.6	184.8	222.3
Urban counties	1.0	2.8	12.6	22.0	44.7	49.3	47.1	55.3	89.9	163.5	252.8	312.7

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Notes: Data begin in July 2000.

DCF grouped counties into regions in state fiscal year 2008. To calculate regional growth rates in earlier years, counties were assigned to their current regional designation.

Growth figures represent the percent change from the first month of data available to the average monthly caseload in each year.

[a] Counties are categorized as rural or urban based on U.S. Census Bureau classifications.

Table B.5. Distribution of SNAP Participants, by Method of Application Submission, 2006–2011, Florida

	Percentage of Average Monthly Caseload					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
SNAP Office						
Paper	38.9	31.6	29.6	27.3	27.8	27.5
Intranet[a]	NA	NA	NA	0.5	16.1	4.0
Other/Unknown	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0
Mail	4.4	4.8	4.5	3.5	2.9	2.4
Fax	0.4	0.5	0.8	1.0	1.2	1.3
Telephone	0.8	0.6	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.1
Online[a]	44.0	49.6	52.5	57.0	43.4	55.2
Community partner	0.2	1.0	1.7	2.5	2.8	5.0
Automatic transfer from SSI CAP	11.3	11.8	10.5	7.4	5.4	4.4
Other/Unknown	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Notes: Data for intranet applications begin in September 2009.

[a] Florida's data system did not differentiate between intranet and Internet until 2009, so both methods are included in the "Online" row before then. From 2009 on, "Online" refers to Internet submissions only.

NA = not available.

Table B.6. Application Approval Rates, by Method of Application Submission, 2001–2011, Florida

	Percentage Approved										
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
All Applications	66.4	68.5	68.6	67.7	76.2	71.0	73.3	76.1	77.9	81.6	82.1
SNAP Office											
Paper	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	74.4	72.8	76.6	77.4	78.4	79.6
Intranet[a]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	79.2	84.0	90.1
Other/Unknown	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mail	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	61.3	65.2	69.4	70.4	72.8	74.1
Fax	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	62.1	69.6	76.5	76.3	77.8	79.0
Telephone	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	52.0	73.0	82.1	86.8	84.9	85.3
Online[a]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	73.4	74.2	76.8	78.3	81.4	82.2
Community partner	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	80.3	83.7	85.1	85.6	85.9	85.7
Automatic transfer from SSI CAP	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	52.6	48.7
Other/Unknown	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	56.3	66.6	64.8	67.9	79.7	72.2

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Notes: Data on community partners begin in February 2006. Data on intranet submissions begin in September 2009.

[a] Florida's data system did not differentiate between intranet and Internet until 2009, so both methods are included in the "Online" row before then. From 2009 on, "Online" refers to Internet submissions only.

NA = not available.

n.a. = not applicable.

Table B.7. Trends in Method of Application Submission and Processing Time, 2001–2011, Florida

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Method of Application Submission (Percentage)											
SNAP office											
Paper	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	8.2	4.6	4.2	2.5	1.9	1.5
Intranet[a]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4.4	15.1	7.0
Other/Unknown	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mail	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2.6	3.1	2.6	1.9	1.6	1.2
Fax	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.5	0.7	0.9	1.1	1.1	1.1
Telephone	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.1
Online[a]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	75.0	77.5	79.6	76.6	63.8	75.8
Community partner	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	0.8	3.1	4.8	6.0	5.4	6.7
Automatic transfer from SSI CAP	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Other/Unknown	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	12.5	10.8	7.5	7.2	10.9	6.5
Timeliness of Application Processing (Percentage)											
All applications	73.1	74.1	77.5	82.5	79.3	73.9	70.9	65.0	65.1	81.5	86.3
Expedited applications	61.4	62.7	66.1	74.7	68.1	53.0	50.3	51.6	56.2	83.2	90.6
Non-expedited applications	78.9	79.9	83.2	86.6	85.7	84.6	82.3	73.3	70.9	80.0	82.6
Application Processing Time (Percentage of Applications)											
Same day	11.4	11.5	12.9	15.1	12.3	9.4	8.0	9.1	9.0	12.0	13.7
1 to 7 days	29.5	28.3	29.3	35.8	38.2	28.0	27.1	25.4	27.1	39.2	40.8
8 to 15 days	19.2	20.1	20.1	17.5	16.5	17.1	14.8	16.2	15.3	10.5	9.3
16 to 23 days	13.5	13.5	13.0	11.2	11.2	14.3	12.0	11.1	10.5	8.8	8.0
24 to 30 days	10.3	11.7	12.2	10.5	10.6	18.1	22.9	17.4	16.5	17.1	17.8
31 to 60 days	14.8	14.2	12.0	9.4	10.4	12.3	14.5	20.2	21.1	12.3	10.0
More than 60 days	1.4	0.9	0.5	0.5	0.9	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.1	0.4
Average Processing Time (days)	15.8	15.4	14.3	12.4	13.1	16.1	17.4	17.6	17.3	13.6	13.0

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Notes: Data on community partners begin in February 2006. Data on intranet submissions begin in September 2009.

          Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and within 30 days for all other applications.

[a] Florida's data system did not differentiate between intranet and Internet until 2009, so both methods are included in the "Online" row before then. From 2009 on, "Online" refers to Internet submissions only.

NA = not available.

n.a. = not applicable.

Table B.8. Application Submissions and Processing Time by Urban or Rural Status, 2001- 2011, Florida

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Rural Counties											
Method of Application Submission (Percentage)											
SNAP office											
Paper	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	7.9	4.0	3.8	3.4	3.0	3.1
Intranet[a]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3.7	20.1	10.7
Other/Unknown	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mail	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	5.1	4.4	3.5	2.9	2.3	1.4
Fax	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.9	1.5	2.1	1.9	2.2	2.0
Telephone	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1
Online[a]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	74.6	75.9	78.6	74.4	56.3	69.7
Community partner	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	1.6	3.5	5.1	6.1	6.2	7.5
Automatic transfer from SSI CAP	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Other/Unknown	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	9.5	10.4	6.5	7.3	9.7	5.4
Timeliness of Application Processing (Percentage)											
All applications	75.9	77.7	80.0	85.5	86.8	78.2	76.1	71.5	73.1	87.9	90.3
Expedited applications	62.7	64.9	67.2	76.8	80.0	60.5	53.6	55.9	61.4	88.6	92.8
Non-expedited applications	81.8	83.5	85.6	89.4	90.1	86.0	86.4	79.7	79.6	87.4	88.4
Average Processing Time (Days)	15.4	14.8	14.1	11.9	11.1	15.2	16.2	16.2	15.6	12.0	11.7
Urban Counties											
Method of Application Submission (Percentage)											
SNAP office											
Paper	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	8.3	4.6	4.3	2.4	1.8	1.3
Intranet[a]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4.4	14.8	6.8
Other/Unknown	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mail	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2.4	3.0	2.5	1.8	1.5	1.2
Fax	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.5	0.6	0.8	1.0	1.1	1.1
Telephone	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.1
Online[a]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	75.0	77.6	79.6	76.7	64.2	76.2
Community partner	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	0.7	3.0	4.8	6.0	5.4	6.7
Automatic transfer from SSI CAP	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Other/Unknown	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	12.7	10.8	7.5	7.2	11.0	6.6
Timeliness of Application Processing (Percentage)											
All applications	72.9	73.9	77.3	82.3	78.8	73.6	70.5	64.6	64.6	81.1	86.0
Expedited applications	61.3	62.5	66.0	74.6	67.4	52.6	50.1	51.3	55.9	82.9	90.5
Non-expedited applications	78.7	79.7	83.1	86.4	85.4	84.5	82.0	72.9	70.3	79.5	82.3
Average Processing Time (days)	15.8	15.4	14.3	12.4	13.3	16.1	17.4	17.7	17.4	13.6	13.1

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Notes: Data on community partners begin in February 2006. Data on intranet submissions begin in September 2009.

Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and within 30 days for all other applications.

Counties are categorized as rural or urban based on U.S. Census Bureau classifications.

[a] Florida's data system did not differentiate between intranet and Internet until 2009, so both methods are included in the "Online" row before then. From 2009, "Online" refers to Internet submissions only.

NA = not available.

n.a. = not applicable.

Table B.9. Application Timeliness, by Method of Application Submission, 2006–2011, Florida

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Applications Processed Timely						
SNAP Office						
Paper	79.4	76.2	71.7	70.1	78.7	81.1
Intranet[a]	NA	NA	NA	61.3	79.5	88.3
Other/Unknown	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mail	79.0	76.0	69.9	70.5	83.4	87.6
Fax	73.4	71.8	70.5	73.0	84.5	86.2
Telephone	90.9	82.4	75.1	79.9	86.6	88.0
Online[a]	71.0	68.2	62.4	63.0	81.4	85.5
Community partner	61.4	64.0	61.7	65.9	84.1	88.0
Automatic transfer from SSI CAP	NA	NA	NA	NA	83.9	90.4
Other/Unknown	86.7	88.0	87.8	84.2	83.3	92.1
Percentage of Applications Processed Same Day						
SNAP Office						
Paper	10.2	8.6	8.9	8.9	8.4	9.4
Intranet[a]	NA	NA	NA	6.3	13.7	18.5
Other/Unknown	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mail	8.3	6.0	6.0	6.3	8.1	9.3
Fax	6.0	5.1	6.4	6.6	8.3	8.5
Telephone	41.8	19.5	11.8	10.4	15.3	16.0
Online[a]	4.5	5.1	6.9	7.1	10.3	11.7
Community partner	2.1	3.6	6.6	8.9	14.1	12.9
Automatic transfer from SSI CAP	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.7	17.7
Other/Unknown	38.4	29.5	36.2	32.7	20.3	34.3

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Notes: Data on community partners begin in February 2006. Data on intranet submissions begin in September 2009.

        Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and within 30 days for all other applications.

[a] Florida's data system did not differentiate between Intranet and Internet until 2009, so both methods are included in the "Online" row before then. From 2009 on, "Online" refers to Internet submissions only.

NA = not available.

Table B.10. Applications Submitted by Community Partners, by Region, 2006–2011, Florida

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Average Monthly Number of Applications Submitted by Community Partners						
Statewide	736	2,923	5,582	10,288	15,240	21,111
Northwest	129	360	437	560	856	1,006
Northeast	69	226	365	579	897	1,220
Central	184	760	1,696	2,948	3,631	5,474
SunCoast	149	544	904	1,056	1,904	3,275
Southeast	181	507	836	1,464	2,298	3,092
Southern	87	528	1,344	3,681	5,655	7,043
Number of Applications Submitted by Partners Online	736	2,923	5,582	10,288	15,236	21,045
Number of Approved Applications Submitted by Partners	608	2,474	4,809	8,965	13,560	18,789

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Notes: Data begin in February 2006.

DCF grouped counties into regions in state fiscal year 2008. To calculate regional submissions in earlier years, counties were assigned to their current regional designation.

Table B.11. Trends in SNAP Participation Turnover, 2000–2011, Florida

	Percentage of New Enrollments										
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Average Monthly Number of New Enrollments	36,574	38,942	47,173	46,014	47,596	44,335	52,576	69,143	93,998	118,959	126,279
Number of Months Not Receiving SNAP Before Application											
1	14.1	12.9	20.9	18.1	19.8	19.0	17.9	16.6	16.3	24.3	28.9
2	5.9	6.1	6.1	5.6	6.2	6.6	6.1	5.6	5.2	5.7	6.7
3	4.0	4.0	3.7	3.4	3.7	4.0	3.7	3.5	3.2	3.4	4.0
4	3.0	3.1	2.8	2.6	2.7	3.0	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.4	2.9
5	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.5	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.0	2.4
6	2.0	2.1	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.3	2.1	1.9	1.8	1.7	2.0
More than 6	7.0	15.4	17.5	19.5	18.1	21.3	23.3	23.5	21.5	17.1	16.3
Did not receive SNAP within data window	61.5	54.0	44.7	46.6	45.2	41.3	41.6	44.1	47.5	43.4	36.8

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Table B.12 Trends in Call Center Statistics, 2008–2011, Florida

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Interactive Voice Response				
Average number of daily calls to the IVR	NA	109,352	143,326	237,276
Average number of daily calls that reach IVR	96,935	120,821	133,219	142,430
Average call duration (mm:ss)	2:01	2:02	2:15	2:18
Average percentage attempt to transfer to staff	63.7	65.1	59.7	61.5
Average percentage transferred to staff	23.3	28.3	25.7	33.5
Call Centers, Total				
Average daily calls in	18,540	21,793	24,197	19,156
Average percentage dropped	16.5	20.2	19.4	19.1
Average waiting time (mm:ss)	8:42	12:46	14:32	14:46
Average duration (mm:ss)	5:48	6:15	6:44	7:11
Average number of staff available	NA	275	296	306
Average daily calls per staff	NA	63	56	48
Call Center, Jacksonville				
Average daily calls in	4,176	4,875	4,627	3,682
Average percentage dropped	22.2	23.3	23.6	25.1
Average waiting time (mm:ss)	10:39	12:42	16:16	19:05
Average duration (mm:ss)	6:00	6:27	7:03	7:52
Average number of staff available	NA	73	75	58
Average daily calls per staff	NA	52	47	48
Call Center, Miami				
Average daily calls in	6,987	8,169	7,803	6,462
Average percentage dropped	16.9	20.0	20.2	17.4
Average waiting time (mm:ss)	9:15	12:59	13:26	15:13
Average duration (mm:ss)	5:59	6:17	6:55	8:00
Average number of staff available	NA	103	106	111
Average daily calls per staff	NA	63	59	48
Call Center, Tampa				
Average daily calls in	7,377	8,570	8,400	6,247
Average percentage dropped	12.9	19.0	20.0	18.6
Average waiting time (mm:ss)	7:53	12:37	13:54	16:38
Average duration (mm:ss)	5:37	6:00	6:14	7:08
Average number of staff available	102	96	115	104
Average daily calls per staff	63	72	59	48

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Call Center, Ocala[a]				
Average daily calls in	n.a.	NA	3,367	3,016
Average percentage dropped	n.a.	NA	10.0	16.3
Average waiting time (mm:ss)	n.a.	NA	NA	8:32
Average duration (mm:ss)	n.a.	NA	NA	2:59
Average number of staff available	n.a.	NA	NA	45
Average daily calls per staff	n.a.	NA	NA	54

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Notes: The first year of data shown do not represent a full year for the following metrics: calls attempted to transfer to agents; calls transferred to agents; available staff overall, in Jacksonville, and in Ocala; and wait time and duration in Jacksonville and Ocala.

The IVR is accessible seven days a week, and the call center operates on business days. For consistency, daily call rates to the IVR are based on the number of business days in a month.

[a] The Ocala location operated for 18 months and was primarily responsible for conducting interviews. The center closed in July 2011 with some workers continuing to telecommute.

NA = not available.

n.a. = not applicable.

Table B.13. Allocation of Reported State Share of Administrative Costs in Nominal Dollars (Thousands), FY 2000–2011, Florida

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Certification	82,379	80,588	83,766	82,831	79,040	69,320	66,098	64,741	71,146	77,190	73,002	84,022
Issuance	5,398	4,966	5,804	5,405	7,174	9,757	11,845	10,674	9,858	9,162	10,300	6,747
Quality Control	668	618	873	887	955	1,072	1,284	1,335	1,084	796	830	744
Fraud	1,319	3,912	1,433	2,855	2,593	2,796	2,306	3,791	2,681	1,901	1,689	1,603
ADP Operations	4,067	4,282	3,673	3,231	3,792	3,602	5,322	2,894	3,086	3,594	3,666	5,717
ADP Development	0	0	0	0	851	383	15	0	0	0	0	0
Employment & Training	1,317	1,368	1,309	1,105	1,479	1,164	1,079	1,435	1,266	1,316	510	155
Outreach	0	30	0	14	53	34	10	4	0	14	130	154
Miscellaneous	494	599	764	709	798	633	670	876	874	1,054	1,218	1,181
SNAP Education	1,681	1,659	2,229	1,563	1,799	1,088	901	1,030	1,521	2,369	4,723	0
Unspecified Other	3,442	3,811	4,161	4,631	4,108	3,387	3,909	4,850	5,189	5,049	5,680	5,966
Total	**100,766**	**101,833**	**104,012**	**103,231**	**102,643**	**93,235**	**93,439**	**91,630**	**96,705**	**102,445**	**101,748**	**106,288**

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the the USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

Table B.14. Allocation of Reported State Share of Administrative Costs in 2005 Dollars (Thousands), FY 2000–2011, Florida

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Certification	92,850	88,824	90,857	87,992	81,665	69,320	64,030	60,946	65,523	70,346	65,772	74,119
Issuance	6,084	5,473	6,295	5,741	7,412	9,757	11,474	10,048	9,078	8,349	9,280	5,951
Quality Control	753	681	947	943	987	1,072	1,244	1,257	998	725	748	656
Fraud	1,487	4,312	1,554	3,033	2,679	2,796	2,234	3,569	2,469	1,733	1,522	1,414
ADP Operations	4,584	4,720	3,984	3,433	3,918	3,602	5,156	2,724	2,842	3,275	3,303	5,043
ADP Development	0	0	0	0	879	383	15	0	0	0	0	0
Employment & Training	1,485	1,508	1,419	1,174	1,528	1,164	1,046	1,351	1,166	1,200	460	136
Outreach	0	33	0	15	55	34	10	4	0	13	118	136
Miscellaneous	557	660	829	753	825	633	649	824	805	961	1,097	1,041
SNAP Education	1,895	1,828	2,418	1,661	1,859	1,088	873	970	1,401	2,159	4,255	0
Unspecified Other	3,880	4,201	4,513	4,919	4,244	3,387	3,786	4,566	4,779	4,601	5,118	5,263
Total	**113,574**	**112,241**	**112,816**	**109,663**	**106,051**	**93,235**	**90,514**	**86,258**	**89,061**	**93,362**	**91,672**	**93,761**

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Note: Adjustment for 2005 dollars is based on GDP deflators calculated by the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

APPENDIX C

SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES – GEORGIA

Table C.1. Trends in SNAP Participation and Economic Indicators, 2005–2011, Georgia

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Average Number of Active Cases per Month	381,886	382,161	387,970	435,602	572,401	709,889	810,282
Average Number of Individual SNAP Recipients per Month	968,468	971,371	987,846	1,108,459	1,440,576	1,742,106	1,917,646
Average Monthly Unemployment Rate (Percentage)	5.2	4.7	4.7	6.3	9.8	10.2	9.8
Average Number of SNAP Recipients per Person Unemployed	4.0	4.4	4.4	3.6	3.1	3.6	4.1
Average Monthly Poverty Rate (Percentage)	14.4	14.7	14.3	14.7	16.5	17.9	NA
SNAP Program Access Index[a]	0.564	0.536	0.547	0.584	0.665	0.749	0.564

Source: Participation is based on Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS. Unemployment rates are from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Poverty rates from 2004 to 2010 are from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Briefs. Poverty rates from 2000 to 2003 are from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. Program Access Index (PAI) data are from USDA, FNS.

[a] PAI, a measure calculated by FNS, represents a ratio of the average monthly number of SNAP participants over the course of a calendar year to the number of state residents with income below 125 percent of the federal poverty level. A higher PAI indicates greater program access.

NA = not available.

Table C.2. Distribution of SNAP Participants, by Characteristic, 2005–2011, Georgia

Participant Characteristic	Percentage of Average Monthly Caseload						
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Individual Characteristics							
Age							
Younger than 18	50.7	51.0	51.0	50.3	48.2	46.3	44.8
18 to 59	42.9	42.5	42.5	43.6	46.2	47.9	48.9
60 and older	6.4	6.5	6.5	6.1	5.6	5.8	6.3
Race or Ethnicity							
White, not Hispanic	30.6	30.6	30.7	31.4	33.0	33.7	33.9
African American, non-Hispanic	64.0	63.7	63.2	61.2	57.1	54.9	54.6
Hispanic, all races	4.6	4.9	5.3	6.5	8.8	10.1	10.2
Other	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.9	1.1	1.3	1.4
Disabled	10.8	11.1	11.1	10.4	9.1	8.7	9.0
Household Characteristics							
Income							
TANF	7.0	4.9	3.8	3.1	2.4	2.0	1.8
SSI & Social Security	34.6	36.0	35.8	33.8	30.2	29.3	27.3
Earnings	30.4	31.3	31.6	31.9	31.7	31.1	29.8
Household Size							
1	37.0	37.1	37.4	38.0	39.4	41.5	44.1
2	20.5	20.3	20.0	19.9	20.2	20.4	20.2
3	18.8	18.8	18.6	18.4	17.9	17.2	16.4
4	13.0	13.1	13.1	13.0	12.4	11.6	10.8
5 or more	10.7	10.8	10.8	10.8	10.2	9.4	8.5
Benefit Amount[a]							
Less than $20	4.9	5.3	5.2	4.5	3.2	3.4	4.0
$20–$50	5.6	5.2	5.1	4.5	3.0	2.8	2.8
$51–$100	11.0	10.8	10.5	9.5	7.0	6.5	6.5
$101–$150	20.5	10.3	9.9	9.2	7.8	7.6	7.7
$151–$200	9.9	20.0	20.2	21.8	25.0	27.4	29.3
$201–$250	6.9	6.5	6.0	5.7	4.3	4.0	3.8
$251–$300	12.9	13.2	13.4	11.3	5.0	4.8	4.6
$301–$350	4.4	4.2	4.0	6.3	6.8	4.9	4.6
$351–$400	10.3	8.9	4.2	3.8	10.1	11.8	11.5
$401 or more	13.5	15.8	21.4	23.4	27.7	26.9	25.3

Participant Characteristic	Percentage of Average Monthly Caseload						
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Length of Current Spell of SNAP Coverage							
Fewer than 6 months	NA	NA	NA	NA	29.2	25.2	23.6
6 months to 1 year	NA	NA	NA	NA	23.5	21.9	20.2
1 to 2 years	NA	NA	NA	NA	18.8	22.3	20.5
2 to 4 years	NA	NA	NA	NA	13.8	16.5	20.8
More than 4 years	NA	NA	NA	NA	14.8	14.0	14.8

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS.

[a] The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act authorized increased SNAP benefit amounts effective in April 2009, so increases from 2008 to 2009 and from 2009 to 2010 are expected.

SSI = Supplemental Security Income, TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

NA = not available.

Table C.3. SNAP Participant Growth Rates, 2005–2011, Georgia

Participant Characteristic	Average Monthly SNAP Participant Growth (Percent)						
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Individual Characteristics							
All SNAP Participants	2.1	2.4	4.1	16.8	51.8	83.6	102.1
Age							
Younger than 18	1.8	2.8	4.5	15.6	44.1	67.4	78.1
18 to 59	2.2	1.6	3.3	18.8	63.5	105.2	130.8
60 and older	3.0	4.5	6.1	12.8	34.7	67.0	100.2
Race or Ethnicity							
White, non-Hispanic	1.4	1.5	3.5	18.9	62.5	100.9	122.0
African American, non-Hispanic	2.0	1.8	2.7	11.5	35.3	57.3	72.1
Hispanic, all races	7.6	15.8	26.5	73.3	204.0	323.2	369.9
Other	7.8	14.8	20.5	55.4	140.5	228.3	295.9
Disabled	2.5	5.1	6.9	12.1	27.8	48.7	68.8
Household Characteristics							
All SNAP Households	2.1	2.2	3.8	16.5	53.1	89.9	116.7
Income							
TANF	-14.3	-40.2	-52.7	-57.1	-55.4	-54.2	-54.4
SSI & Social Security	-0.8	3.3	4.3	10.5	30.0	56.2	81.5
Earnings	2.8	5.9	8.4	23.0	60.5	95.5	113.9
Benefit Amount[a]							
Less than $20	0.5	8.4	9.0	6.5	0.2	29.2	73.3
$20–$50	-1.3	-9.2	-9.9	-11.1	-20.9	-8.9	4.6
$51–$100	-0.2	-2.1	-3.2	-1.9	-4.8	9.6	24.7
$101–$150	-13.0	-56.5	-57.4	-55.6	-50.8	-40.2	-31.1
$151–$200	66.5	235.4	243.6	316.2	527.1	752.6	940.9
$201–$250	-0.9	-6.8	-11.4	-6.2	-6.1	7.4	16.8
$251–$300	3.2	5.5	8.8	3.1	-39.8	-29.4	-22.7
$301–$350	0.0	-5.3	-7.7	62.0	128.5	106.3	120.8
$351–$400	3.4	-10.5	-56.8	-55.9	52.9	121.1	146.3
$401 or more	4.6	22.1	68.6	106.6	222.0	286.7	315.2

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS.

[a] The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act authorized increased SNAP benefit amounts effective in April 2009, so increases from 2008 to 2009 and from 2009 to 2010 are expected.

Note: Growth figures represent the percent change from the first month of data available to the average monthly caseload in each year.

SSI = Supplemental Security Income, TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Table C.4. Growth in SNAP Caseload, by Region and County Characteristics, 2005–2011, Georgia

	Average Monthly SNAP Caseload Growth (Percent)						
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Statewide	2.1	2.2	3.8	16.5	53.1	89.9	116.7
Region 1	2.1	5.4	8.1	24.0	75.4	117.0	144.6
Region 2	1.9	2.9	5.1	20.8	72.7	123.7	151.6
Region 3	5.4	8.8	9.4	26.9	79.2	129.4	122.2
Region 4	2.9	4.9	7.9	21.8	59.5	90.5	106.5
Region 5	2.1	5.9	8.6	24.4	65.4	108.1	139.3
Region 6	1.6	3.0	6.3	16.9	43.8	75.1	96.8
Region 7	-0.8	-2.3	-3.0	5.3	29.5	52.4	69.6
Region 8	0.5	0.8	2.8	9.2	28.8	50.3	65.2
Region 9	-0.3	0.0	1.4	10.2	34.3	57.2	73.8
Region 10	-0.8	-1.8	-1.3	6.8	29.2	52.5	69.2
Region 11	0.5	0.1	3.6	15.0	44.6	74.6	93.3
Region 12	-0.6	-3.0	-6.4	0.5	29.1	61.4	85.8
Region 13	7.8	10.4	14.7	37.4	86.8	145.6	197.0
Region 14	3.2	1.7	4.2	16.1	53.7	91.5	123.1
Region 15	7.4	4.3	3.2	30.5	104.1	177.0	264.2
County Characteristics[a]							
Rural counties	0.3	0.0	1.1	10.3	39.0	66.7	93.7
Urban counties	2.9	3.1	4.8	18.9	58.5	98.7	125.5

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS.

[a] Counties are categorized as rural or urban based on U.S. Census Bureau classifications.

Note: Growth figures represent the percent change from the first month of data available to the average monthly caseload in each year.

Table C.5. Application Approval Rates, by Method of Application Submission, 2010–2011, Georgia

	Percentage Approved	
	2010	2011
All Applications	66.0	65.9
Method of Application Submission (Percentage)		
Online	NA	58.2
Other	NA	75.9

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS.

Notes: Application submission data begin in July 2010. Application method data begin in March 2011. Data are missing for June 2011.

NA = not available.

Table C.6. Trends in Method of Application Submissions and Processing Time, 2010–2011, Georgia

	2010	2011
Method of Application Submission (percentage)		
Online	NA	59.8
Other	NA	40.2
Percentage Timely		
All applications	NA	87.3
Expedited applications	NA	93.9
Non-expedited applications	NA	84.8
Application Processing Time (percentage of applications)		
Same day	12.4	10.3
1 to 7 days	26.4	34.8
8 to 15 days	15.3	14.8
16 to 23 days	14.0	12.5
24 to 30 days	22.6	18.7
31 to 60 days	9.1	8.6
More than 60 days	0.3	0.4
Average Processing Time (days)	15.2	13.9

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS.

Notes: Application processing time data begin in July 2010. Application method data begin in March 2011. Data are missing for June 2011. Timeliness data begin in July 2011.

Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and within 30 days for all other applications.

NA = not available.

Table C.7. Application Submissions and Processing Time, by Urban or Rural Status, 2010–2011, Georgia

	2010	2011
Rural Counties		
Method of Application Submission (percentage)		
Online	NA	51.4
Other	NA	48.6
Percentage Timely		
All applications	NA	91.8
Expedited applications	NA	96.5
Non-expedited applications	NA	90.2
Average Processing Time (days)	14.1	12.7
Urban Counties		
Method of application submission (percentage)		
Online	NA	61.6
Other	NA	38.4
Percentage Timely		
All applications	NA	86.3
Expedited applications	NA	93.4
Non-expedited applications	NA	83.6
Average Processing Time (days)	15.5	14.2

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS.

Notes: Application processing time data begin in July 2010. Application method data begin in March 2011. Data are missing for June 2011. Timeliness data begin in July 2011.

Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and within 30 days for all other applications.

Counties are categorized as rural or urban based on U.S. Census Bureau classifications.

NA = not available.

Table C.8. Application Timeliness, by Mode of Application, 2011, Georgia

	2011
Percentage of Applications Processed Timely	
Method of Application Submission	
Online	84.7
Other	91.7
Percentage of Applications Processed Same Day	
Method of Application Submission	
Online	5.6
Other	16.0

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS.

Notes: Data for percentage of applications processed timely begin in July 2011. Data for percentage of applications processed same day begin in March 2011. Data are missing for June 2011.

Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications or within 30 days for all other applications.

Table C.9. Trends in SNAP Participation Turnover, 2005–2011, Georgia

	Percentage of New Enrollments						
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Average Monthly Number of New Enrollments	26,867	25,570	25,895	31,196	37,267	40,255	44,711
Number of Months Not Receiving SNAP Before Application							
1	NA	23.4	23.5	20.3	18.1	20.7	24.1
2	NA	6.9	6.7	5.8	4.7	5.4	5.5
3	NA	4.3	4.2	3.6	2.8	3.1	3.2
4	NA	3.2	3.1	2.6	2.1	2.2	2.4
5	NA	2.5	2.5	2.2	1.7	1.8	1.9
6	NA	2.1	2.1	1.9	1.5	1.5	1.7
More than 6	NA	11.4	17.4	20.6	19.3	17.4	17.2
Did not receive SNAP within data window	NA	46.2	40.4	43.0	49.8	47.9	43.9

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS.

NA = not available.

Table C.10. Allocation of Reported State Share of Administrative Costs in Nominal Dollars (Thousands), FY 2000–2011, Georgia

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Certification	34,320	32,371	35,785	33,328	35,837	35,879	40,850	42,174	48,130	41,999	37,311	46,893
Issuance	1,716	2,104	2,585	3,072	4,646	4,142	4,046	4,012	3,468	3,454	3,569	4,648
Quality Control	519	453	226	225	137	27	13	250	506	374	365	466
Fraud	4,895	4,707	5,682	5,572	3,879	3,255	3,087	3,426	3,255	3,772	2,961	2,626
ADP Operations	7,763	4,701	6,638	7,326	6,576	7,597	5,046	4,524	4,875	4,994	7,267	6,191
ADP Development	210	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Employment & Training	552	614	191	223	254	215	237	246	253	261	5	1
Outreach	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	402	570	690	638
Miscellaneous	275	239	202	236	302	111	270	410	841	515	487	421
SNAP Education	954	918	2,650	2,655	882	375	0	6	527	720	1,279	0
Unspecified Other	7,207	6,470	7,367	7,106	5,267	2,671	2,494	2,806	3,922	3,259	3,450	3,147
Total	**58,411**	**52,576**	**61,327**	**59,744**	**57,780**	**54,273**	**56,044**	**57,870**	**66,179**	**59,919**	**57,384**	**65,032**

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

Table C.11. Allocation of Reported State Share of Administrative Costs in 2005 Dollars (Thousands), FY 2000- 2011, Georgia

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Certification	38,682	35,679	38,814	35,405	37,027	35,879	39,571	39,702	44,326	38,276	33,616	41,366
Issuance	1,934	2,319	2,803	3,263	4,800	4,142	3,919	3,777	3,193	3,148	3,216	4,100
Quality Control	584	499	245	239	141	27	13	236	466	341	329	411
Fraud	5,518	5,188	6,163	5,919	4,008	3,255	2,991	3,225	2,998	3,438	2,668	2,317
ADP Operations	8,749	5,182	7,200	7,783	6,794	7,597	4,888	4,259	4,490	4,551	6,547	5,461
ADP Development	237	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Employment & Training	622	677	207	237	262	215	230	232	233	238	4	1
Outreach	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	371	519	621	562
Miscellaneous	310	263	220	250	312	111	262	386	775	469	439	372
SNAP Education	1,075	1,012	2,875	2,820	911	375	0	6	485	656	1,152	0
Unspecified Other	8,123	7,131	7,991	7,549	5,442	2,671	2,416	2,641	3,612	2,970	3,109	2,776
Total	**65,836**	**57,949**	**66,519**	**63,466**	**59,698**	**54,273**	**54,290**	**54,477**	**60,949**	**54,607**	**51,701**	**57,367**

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Note: Adjustment for 2005 dollars is based on GDP deflators calculated by the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

APPENDIX D

SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES – MASSACHUSETTS

Table D.1. Trends in SNAP Participation and Economic Indicators, 2003–2011, Massachusetts

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Average Number of Active Cases per Month	130,638	145,162	181,773	214,744	225,754	259,907	336,119	396,718	429,201
Average Number of Individual SNAP Recipients per Month	281,413	311,023	356,897	398,889	421,821	484,060	617,870	720,502	770,095
Average Monthly Unemployment Rate (percentage)	5.8	5.2	4.8	4.8	4.5	5.4	8.3	8.3	7.4
Average Number of SNAP Recipients per Person Unemployed	1.4	1.8	2.2	2.4	2.7	2.6	2.2	2.5	3.0
Average Monthly Poverty Rate (percentage)	10.1	9.2	10.3	9.9	9.9	10.0	10.3	11.4	NA
SNAP Program Access Index[a]	NA	NA	0.473	0.536	0.585	0.654	0.776	0.810	NA

Source: Participation is based on Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA. Unemployment rates are from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Poverty rates from 2004 to 2010 are from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Briefs. Poverty rates from 2000 to 2003 are from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. Program Access Index (PAI) data are from the USDA FNS.

[a] PAI, a measure calculated by FNS, represents a ratio of the average monthly number of SNAP participants over the course of a calendar year to the number of state residents with income below 125 percent of the federal poverty level. A higher PAI indicates greater program access.

NA = not available.

Table D.2. Distribution of SNAP Participants, by Characteristic, 2003–2011, Massachusetts

Participant Characteristic	Percentage of Average Monthly Caseload								
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Individual Characteristics									
Age									
Younger than 18	48.5	47.9	43.9	41.1	41.1	40.4	38.8	37.9	37.1
18 to 59	42.6	43.4	44.9	46.1	46.2	47.0	48.2	48.8	49.0
60 and older	8.9	8.7	11.2	12.8	12.7	12.6	12.9	13.3	13.9
Race or Ethnicity									
White, not Hispanic	NA	NA	NA	NA	35.1	45.2	44.1	42.5	41.1
African American, non-Hispanic	NA	NA	NA	NA	12.1	15.2	14.3	13.8	13.4
Hispanic, all races	NA	NA	NA	NA	21.9	28.4	27.1	26.2	26.1
Other	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.1	0.4	0.8	1.0	1.2
Missing	NA	NA	NA	NA	30.9	10.7	13.7	16.4	18.2
Disabled	NA	26.5	31.4	27.6	30.9	29.6	25.2	28.2	30.2
Household Characteristics									
Income									
TANF	39.3	35.6	28.2	23.1	21.8	20.2	17.4	15.7	15.0
SSI & Social Security	42.5	46.2	54.8	58.6	57.3	54.6	50.9	49.9	50.2
Earnings	16.0	18.4	17.0	16.1	17.2	18.2	18.6	19.1	19.5
Household Size									
1	45.1	45.5	53.7	58.5	57.7	57.6	58.5	59.2	59.9
2	22.4	22.1	19.0	17.2	17.7	18.0	17.9	17.9	17.9
3	15.8	15.8	13.5	12.0	12.3	12.3	11.9	11.7	11.4
4	9.8	9.7	8.2	7.3	7.4	7.3	7.1	6.8	6.6
5 or more	7.0	6.8	5.6	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.6	4.4	4.2

Participant Characteristic	Percentage of Average Monthly Caseload								
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Benefit Amount[a]									
Less than $20	14.4	12.4	6.5	7.0	4.9	3.2	2.6	2.5	2.8
$20–$50	6.5	5.9	15.1	16.3	13.6	7.6	1.9	1.8	1.9
$51–$100	12.3	12.1	14.3	16.3	14.8	12.4	10.0	9.2	5.2
$101–$150	27.1	28.5	22.6	12.3	11.9	13.3	11.8	11.4	13.3
$151–$200	7.0	6.7	11.4	20.9	25.3	31.7	40.0	41.9	44.6
$201–$250	8.3	6.7	5.2	4.4	4.1	3.7	2.9	2.9	2.9
$251–$300	8.8	10.5	9.5	8.8	10.1	8.4	3.3	3.2	3.2
$301–$350	5.0	4.5	3.2	2.6	2.4	5.3	4.6	3.5	3.4
$351–$400	5.0	6.0	5.9	4.7	2.9	2.3	8.4	9.4	9.2
$401 or more	5.6	6.6	6.3	6.7	10.0	12.2	14.5	14.1	13.5
Length of Current Spell of SNAP Coverage									
Fewer than 6 months	NA	NA	NA	NA	28.1	29.9	28.7	22.2	22.6
6 months to 1 year	NA	NA	NA	NA	18.7	20.6	24.2	21.4	19.0
1 to 2 years	NA	NA	NA	NA	23.6	15.2	18.0	24.3	19.7
2 to 4 years	NA	NA	NA	NA	18.8	23.3	16.0	15.9	21.7
More than 4 years	NA	NA	NA	NA	10.8	11.0	13.2	16.2	17.0

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

Notes: Disability data begin in February 2004. Race/Ethnicity data begin in April 2007. Length of spell coverage data begin in 2007.

[a] The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act authorized increased SNAP benefit amounts effective in April 2009, so increases from 2008 to 2009 and from 2009 to 2010 are expected.

SSI = Supplemental Security Income, TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

NA = not available.

Table D.3. SNAP Participant Growth Rates, 2003–2011, Massachusetts

Participant Characteristic	Average Monthly SNAP Participant Growth (Percent)								
	2003[a]	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Individual Characteristics									
All SNAP Participants	7.7	19.0	36.5	52.6	61.4	85.2	136.4	175.6	194.6
Age									
Younger than 18	5.9	15.6	21.5	27.1	34.5	51.8	86.2	111.8	121.7
18 to 59	10.5	24.6	47.9	69.7	79.5	109.7	174.8	224.0	247.7
60 and older	4.6	11.9	65.7	112.3	123.2	153.5	232.2	299.3	345.7
Household Characteristics									
All SNAP Households	6.5	18.3	48.1	75.0	84.0	111.8	173.9	223.3	249.8
Income									
TANF	2.0	2.8	2.0	-1.2	-2.1	4.6	16.0	24.1	27.7
SSI & Social Security	4.7	16.1	72.2	117.6	123.9	145.6	196.2	242.5	272.6
Earnings	16.3	48.1	71.6	92.5	116.1	162.1	246.6	320.4	365.2
Benefit Amount[a]									
Less than $20	-6.1	-10.6	-41.5	-25.5	-45.2	-58.8	-56.7	-49.7	-41.1
$20–$50	2.1	3.6	231.1	320.9	270.2	138.2	-22.3	-14.4	-0.8
$51–$100	3.3	12.8	66.1	123.8	114.3	106.5	116.2	134.3	42.1
$101–$150	8.1	26.5	25.8	-19.2	-18.2	6.0	21.0	38.6	74.4
$151–$200	5.3	11.7	139.1	419.4	560.1	850.9	1,454.2	1,819.4	2,112.5
$201–$250	2.4	-7.1	-10.2	-9.7	-11.4	-9.6	-6.9	8.5	17.2
$251–$300	21.1	61.9	82.4	99.7	141.5	131.5	17.2	34.6	45.6
$301–$350	11.4	9.7	-1.1	-5.3	-10.0	131.2	158.8	135.0	144.9
$351–$400	20.5	61.2	98.2	86.2	20.1	9.1	417.5	585.3	628.6
$401 or more	21.8	58.7	89.0	138.5	274.7	423.3	705.9	828.0	861.4

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

[a] The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act authorized increased SNAP benefit amounts effective in April 2009, so increases from 2008 to 2009 and from 2009 to 2010 are expected.

Note: Growth figures represent the percent change from the first month of data available to the average monthly caseload in each year.

SSI = Supplemental Security Income, TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

Table D.4. Growth in SNAP Caseload, by Region and County Characteristics, 2003–2011, Massachusetts

	Average Monthly SNAP Caseload Growth (Percent)								
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Statewide	6.5	18.3	48.1	75.0	84.0	111.8	173.9	223.3	249.8
Southern	5.2	18.3	29.2	44.5	66.4	96.1	161.1	216.9	252.4
Eastern	9.4	30.2	122.0	204.9	197.8	230.7	309.4	370.2	406.8
Western	5.9	17.5	24.3	39.3	55.5	83.8	142.8	187.0	216.6
Northern	8.0	23.6	35.3	53.5	69.7	103.4	176.9	236.9	246.9
County Characteristics[a]									
Rural counties	-4.1	2.8	21.4	43.1	61.0	86.9	210.2	302.0	384.6
Urban counties	6.7	19.1	49.1	76.2	85.2	113.2	175.6	225.3	251.8

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

[a] Counties are categorized as rural or urban based on U.S. Census Bureau classifications.

Note: Growth figures represent the percent change from the first month of data available to the average monthly caseload in each year.

Table D.5. Distribution of SNAP Participants, by Method of Application Submission, 2003–2011, Massachusetts

	Percentage of Average Monthly Caseload								
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
SNAP Office									
Walk in	95.4	87.0	68.4	60.2	61.0	61.7	59.9	57.7	56.2
Drop off	0.2	3.1	4.6	5.2	5.9	6.8	7.7	8.7	10.3
Mail in	4.0	7.9	9.0	8.9	9.7	11.1	13.1	14.1	15.1
Fax	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.7	1.0	1.3	1.4
Other/Unknown	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
MA Virtual Gateway									
Client view	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.0	0.1	1.2	3.1	4.2	4.9
Provider view	n.a.	NA	NA	0.1	0.4	1.1	1.8	2.1	2.3
Unknown	n.a.	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.5
Community Partner	0.0	0.2	0.6	1.1	1.1	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.3
Automatic Transfer from SSI Combined Application Project	0.0	0.1	14.2	21.1	18.3	13.8	10.0	8.7	7.1
Other/Unknown[a]	0.1	1.2	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.4	2.1	1.7

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

Notes: Application submission data begin in September 2003. Data for MA Virtual Gateway Unknown begin in August 2004. Data for MA Virtual Gateway Client View and MA Virtual Gateway Provider View begin in March 2006.

[a] May include applications submitted by telephone under certain special circumstances.

NA = not available.

n.a. = not applicable.

Table D.6. Application Approval Rates, by Method of Application Submission, 2003–2011, Massachusetts

	Percentage Approved								
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
All Applications	72.7	72.0	70.0	71.3	72.8	71.5	69.5	68.4	67.6
SNAP Office									
Walk in	74.1	73.9	73.6	74.7	76.1	77.7	77.8	78.3	79.5
Drop off	64.2	63.2	62.8	66.4	68.2	69.1	66.5	66.5	68.8
Mail in	66.9	65.4	61.1	63.2	65.7	66.1	63.2	64.3	67.4
Fax	65.2	61.4	59.6	60.0	64.5	65.5	63.5	62.9	66.7
Other/Unknown	69.6	68.6	57.9	58.1	61.0	72.5	70.4	70.9	71.0
MA Virtual Gateway									
Client view	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	42.9	41.5	45.5	44.7	45.4	41.1
Provider view	n.a.	NA	NA	31.0	51.0	54.4	52.3	51.5	52.6
Unknown	n.a.	34.1	21.1	27.9	37.6	41.2	40.0	37.6	35.3
Community Partner	60.6	53.2	48.4	55.6	59.0	66.6	66.7	71.4	71.6
Automatic Transfer from SSI Combined Application Project	60.4	60.1	70.1	70.2	65.6	60.8	86.4	46.9	71.4
Other/Unknown[a]	67.6	79.8	70.2	71.4	73.9	74.8	71.0	75.0	82.3

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

Notes: Application Approval rate data begin in September 2003. Data for MA Virtual Gateway Unknown begin in August 2004. Data for MA Virtual Gateway Client View and MA Virtual Gateway Provider View begin in March 2006.

[a] May include applications submitted by telephone under certain special circumstances.

NA = not available.

n.a. = not applicable.

Table D.7. Trends in Method and Location of Application Submissions and Processing Time, 2003–2011, Massachusetts

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Method of Application Submission (Percentage)									
SNAP Office									
Walk in	82.9	76.4	51.7	70.4	70.5	60.6	51.7	50.7	44.7
Drop off	5.2	8.5	6.3	9.3	9.2	9.0	9.6	12.6	14.2
Mail in	9.3	10.4	8.0	10.8	11.5	14.2	15.3	14.7	16.2
Fax	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.9	1.1	1.2	1.7	2.0	1.5
Other/Unknown	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3
MA Virtual Gateway									
Client view	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.2	0.6	7.5	11.0	12.5	16.4
Provider view	n.a.	NA	NA	0.7	2.4	3.3	4.0	4.3	4.0
Unknown	n.a.	0.1	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.8	1.1	1.5	2.0
Community partner	0.3	0.7	1.9	3.3	1.0	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1
Automatic transfer from SSI Combined Application Project	0.2	0.2	28.7	1.7	1.3	0.7	4.0	0.6	0.0
Other/Unknown[a]	1.3	2.9	2.3	2.4	2.0	2.1	1.3	0.8	0.5
Percentage Timely									
All applications	80.8	80.5	84.7	78.6	79.2	75.8	73.7	71.6	68.7
Expedited applications	71.6	67.1	82.0	62.8	64.9	58.1	50.9	48.0	38.5
Non-expedited applications	84.5	86.7	87.6	86.7	87.1	85.3	84.6	82.3	81.3
Application Processing Time (Percentage of Applications)									
Same day	25.3	25.2	45.4	26.3	28.0	24.8	24.0	19.6	15.5
1 to 7 days	23.0	22.6	15.3	20.9	21.3	20.3	19.1	20.3	21.6
8 to 15 days	15.5	15.1	10.4	13.8	13.7	13.5	13.0	13.5	13.5
16 to 23 days	9.5	9.7	7.2	9.3	8.9	9.0	9.2	9.6	9.4
24 to 30 days	13.9	16.6	14.2	18.6	17.1	19.4	20.4	21.0	22.7
31 to 60 days	11.5	10.1	7.0	10.5	10.4	12.3	13.5	15.2	16.6
More than 60 days	1.2	0.8	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.8
Average Processing Time (Days)	16.6	14.7	10.1	13.7	13.2	14.5	15.2	16.2	17.2

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

Notes: Application data begin in September 2003. Data for MA Virtual Gateway Unknown begin in August 2004. Data for MA Virtual Gateway Client View and MA Virtual Gateway Provider View begin in March 2006.

Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and within 30 days for all other applications.

[a] May include applications submitted by telephone under certain special circumstances.

NA = not available.   n.a. = not applicable.

Table D.8. Application Submissions and Processing Time by Urban or Rural Status, 2003–2011, Massachusetts

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Rural Counties									
Method of Application Submission (percentage)									
SNAP office									
Walk in	41.9	28.9	16.7	29.2	23.2	20.6	15.1	7.7	10.2
Drop off	21.6	10.4	2.3	5.1	2.9	3.6	19.5	31.2	6.8
Mail in	9.5	29.9	29.5	40.3	50.0	46.9	21.1	10.8	18.1
Fax	5.4	8.1	2.5	3.2	8.8	9.3	11.0	9.8	20.5
Other/Unknown	8.1	12.3	13.3	16.6	5.5	2.1	0.0	0.1	0.1
MA Virtual Gateway									
Client view	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.0	0.0	8.8	14.6	16.8	21.4
Provider view	n.a.	NA	NA	2.0	5.1	7.5	11.9	20.3	20.2
Unknown	n.a.	NA	3.1	0.4	0.4	0.0	2.3	2.9	2.7
Community partner	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.4	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
Automatic transfer from SSI Combined Application Project	0.0	0.0	29.7	0.4	0.0	0.8	3.8	0.1	0.0
Other/Unknown[a]	13.5	10.0	2.8	2.4	3.3	0.5	0.8	0.1	0.0
Percentage Timely									
All applications	72.2	56.0	61.5	52.0	61.2	58.3	58.0	61.9	63.1
Expedited applications	55.6	36.9	61.1	37.9	50.0	47.2	49.2	52.9	46.0
Non-expedited applications	77.8	69.8	62.2	64.6	74.4	68.0	67.4	71.8	76.5
Average Processing Time (days)	21.8	21.5	17.1	21.4	18.1	19.8	18.7	18.1	18.3
Urban Counties									
Method of Application Submission (percentage)									
SNAP office									
Walk in	83.0	76.5	51.8	70.5	70.6	60.7	51.7	50.8	44.8
Drop off	5.2	8.5	6.3	9.3	9.2	9.0	9.6	12.6	14.3
Mail in	9.3	10.3	7.9	10.7	11.4	14.2	15.3	14.7	16.2
Fax	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.9	1.1	1.2	1.6	2.0	1.4
Other/Unknown	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3
MA Virtual Gateway									
Client view	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0.2	0.6	7.5	11.0	12.5	16.4
Provider view	n.a.	NA	NA	0.7	2.4	3.3	3.9	4.3	4.0
Unknown	n.a.	0.1	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.8	1.1	1.5	2.0
Community partner	0.3	0.7	1.9	3.3	1.0	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1
Automatic transfer from SSI Combined Application Project	0.2	0.2	28.6	1.7	1.2	0.7	4.0	0.6	0.0
Other/Unknown[a]	1.3	2.9	2.3	2.4	2.0	2.1	1.3	0.8	0.5

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Percentage Timely									
All applications	81.4	80.6	84.7	78.6	79.3	75.9	73.7	71.6	68.7
Expedited applications	72.5	67.2	82.0	62.9	65.0	58.1	50.9	47.9	38.5
Non-expedited applications	84.9	86.7	87.6	86.7	87.1	85.3	84.6	82.3	81.3
Average Processing Time (Days)	16.5	14.7	10.1	13.7	13.2	14.5	15.2	16.2	17.2

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

Notes: Application data begin in September 2003. Data for MA Virtual Gateway Unknown begin in March 2005. Data for MA Virtual Gateway Client View and MA Virtual Gateway Provider View begin in March 2006.

Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications or within 30 days for all other applications.

Counties are categorized as rural or urban based on U.S. Census Bureau classifications.

[a] May include applications submitted by telephone under certain special circumstances.

NA = not available.

n.a. = not applicable.

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Table D.9. Application Timeliness, by Method of Application Submission, 2003–2011, Massachusetts

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Applications Processed Timely									
SNAP Office									
Walk in	83.2	84.1	84.3	83.6	84.2	83.9	83.5	83.2	83.6
Drop off	68.2	68.3	66.8	68.7	68.8	69.9	66.6	65.9	68.8
Mail in	69.6	67.9	64.7	63.6	66.5	65.3	62.8	64.1	67.5
Fax	69.0	66.1	62.7	63.8	65.9	64.3	65.2	65.5	68.7
Other/Unknown	69.6	75.1	63.7	61.3	70.9	71.6	69.4	71.6	73.5
MA Virtual Gateway									
Client view	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	53.8	49.9	49.2	48.5	47.2	37.6
Provider view	n.a.	NA	NA	50.2	59.0	59.8	59.3	56.1	48.8
Unknown	n.a.	50.0	41.1	45.5	44.6	44.1	44.1	40.7	28.5
Community partner	62.0	59.7	58.8	62.0	66.6	72.3	74.1	70.7	75.3
Automatic transfer from SSI Combined Application Project	56.4	55.0	99.1	89.8	89.6	90.2	99.1	97.4	67.9
Other/Unknown[a]	72.1	77.8	68.6	69.6	71.7	71.9	71.5	74.8	82.7
Percentage of Applications Processed Same Day									
SNAP Office									
Walk in	29.2	31.4	32.0	33.6	36.1	37.2	35.7	34.5	31.1
Drop off	5.1	6.1	5.8	7.0	6.2	5.4	6.3	5.4	4.5
Mail in	5.8	4.4	3.7	4.0	5.1	4.6	3.0	2.5	3.3
Fax	8.6	4.4	3.0	4.8	5.3	4.4	3.9	2.5	3.0
Other/Unknown	8.0	9.9	14.5	12.2	15.9	10.6	9.4	9.3	8.9
MA Virtual Gateway									
Client view	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2.5	1.6	2.1	1.9	1.6	1.0
Provider view	n.a.	NA	NA	3.0	3.6	2.7	2.1	1.9	1.4
Unknown	n.a.	7.3	0.9	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Community partner	3.5	7.5	4.6	4.8	6.4	12.7	18.1	24.6	15.2
Automatic transfer from SSI Combined Application Project	7.9	1.0	96.8	74.0	76.4	77.4	97.7	92.1	3.6
Other/Unknown[a]	14.0	4.1	4.0	4.2	7.4	5.1	3.9	2.5	3.8

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

Notes: Application data begin in September 2003. Data for MA Virtual Gateway Unknown begin in August 2004. Data for MA Virtual Gateway Client View and MA Virtual Gateway Provider View begin in March 2006.

Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications or within 30 days for all other applications.

[a] May include applications submitted by telephone under certain special circumstances.

NA = not available.   n.a. = not applicable.

Table D.10. Trends in SNAP Participation Turnover, 2003–2011, Massachusetts

	Percentage of New Enrollments								
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Average Monthly Number of New Enrollments	10,608	12,024	17,963	14,211	15,636	18,771	21,208	19,390	21,050
Number of Months Not Receiving SNAP Before Application									
1	NA	25.0	18.7	28.3	28.6	25.5	21.8	21.9	26.3
2	NA	6.6	5.3	7.6	7.6	6.6	6.2	7.2	7.7
3	NA	3.8	3.0	4.1	4.1	3.7	3.4	3.9	4.1
4	NA	2.7	2.3	2.9	3.0	2.6	2.4	2.8	2.8
5	NA	2.2	1.7	2.4	2.4	2.2	1.9	2.0	2.3
6	NA	1.9	1.5	2.0	2.0	1.9	1.6	1.7	2.0
More than 6	NA	9.5	14.3	16.3	18.8	20.9	22.1	19.0	19.5
Did not receive SNAP within data window	NA	48.2	53.1	36.3	33.4	36.6	40.6	41.4	35.3

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

Notes: Enrollment data begin in February 2003.

NA = not available.

Table D.11. Trends in Regional and Statewide Staffing of FTEs, 2007- 2012, Massachusetts

| | Total Staff, Full–Time Equivalents (FTEs) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2007 | | | 2008 | | | | | 2009 | | | | | | | | 2010 | | 2011 | | | | 2012 |
Region	Sep	Nov	Jan	Mar	Jul	Sep	Jan	Mar	May	Aug	Oct	Dec	Feb	Apr	Aug	Feb	Apr	Aug	Oct	Dec	Feb
East	88.8	87.8	96.8	91.8	89.8	98.6	93.2	95.8	113.5	105.7	104.7	117.4	114.4	108.4	89.6	114.6	121.6	122.6	119.6	116.6	58.8
North	60.4	61.4	70.4	65.4	65.8	67.9	70.7	70.7	75.7	76.2	74.4	82.8	82.8	81.8	78.5	85.7	82.4	79.0	79.4	80.0	119.7
South	56.2	56.8	63.0	61.6	62.6	60.6	65.6	64.6	72.6	64.6	63.6	71.6	73.6	72.6	65.6	76.6	75.6	79.6	80.6	80.6	82.6
West	80.0	79.6	84.8	82.0	81.1	88.1	87.5	87.5	104.8	101.8	100.8	106.8	106.9	105.9	94.3	103.4	103.2	102.4	101.4	99.4	110.2
Statewide	285.4	285.6	315.0	300.8	299.2	315.1	317.0	318.6	366.6	348.4	343.6	378.6	377.7	368.7	328.0	380.3	382.8	383.6	381.0	376.6	371.3

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

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Table D.12. Trends in Regional and Statewide Staffing of Supervisors (FTEs), 2007- 2012, Massachusetts

| | Total Supervisors (FTEs) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2007 | | 2008 | | | | 2009 | | | | | | 2010 | | | | 2011 | | | | 2012 |
Region	Sep	Nov	Jan	Mar	Jul	Sep	Jan	Mar	May	Aug	Oct	Dec	Feb	Apr	Aug	Feb	Apr	Aug	Oct	Dec	Feb
East	43.2	43.3	48.3	48.3	46.3	47.3	45.3	46.3	47.3	52.3	50.3	49.3	47.3	47.3	66.4	66.9	70.5	69.5	70.5	69.5	40.9
North	35.6	35.6	35.6	34.7	34.9	35.9	30.9	29.9	31.4	39.7	39.9	39.9	37.9	36.9	45.9	43.9	38.4	36.4	34.6	34.6	56.6
South	36.0	36.0	35.0	33.0	33.0	35.0	33.0	33.0	33.0	38.0	38.0	38.0	37.0	36.0	47.0	46.0	52.0	51.0	49.0	48.0	47.0
West	48.6	47.6	47.8	47.8	49.8	49.8	48.8	47.8	45.8	49.8	49.8	47.8	44.8	44.8	50.8	47.8	50.8	49.8	48.8	49.8	55.6
Statewide	163.4	162.4	166.6	163.8	164.0	168.	158.0	157.0	157.5	179.8	178.0	175.0	167.0	165.0	210.1	204.6	211.7	206.7	202.9	201.9	200.1

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

Table D.13. Trends in Regional and Statewide Staffing of Managers, 2008- 2012, Massachusetts

	Total Managers (FTEs)																	
	2008				2009						2010				2011				2012
Region	Jan	Mar	Jul	Sep	Jan	Mar	May	Aug	Oct	Dec	Feb	Apr	Aug	Feb	Apr	Aug	Oct	Dec	Feb
East	18	17	17	16	16	15	14	16	16	16	16	16	20	20	21	22	22	20	10
North	14	14	13	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	11	11	12	11	10	10	19
South	18	18	18	17	16	17	17	17	17	17	16	16	15	12	13	13	13	13	13
West	20	20	19	18	17	17	17	17	16	16	17	18	17	15	13	15	15	15	18
Statewide	70	69	67	63	61	61	60	62	61	61	61	62	63	58	59	61	60	58	60

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

Table D.14. Trends in Regional Caseload per Worker, 2007–2012, Massachusetts

	Caseload per Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)																			
	2007		2008				2009					2010			2011					2012
Region	Sep	Nov	Jan	Mar	Jul	Sep	Jan	Mar	May	Aug	Oct	Dec	Feb	Apr	Aug	Feb	Apr	Aug	Oct	Dec	Feb
East	443	463	425	463	498	500	586	608	546	631	695	631	693	745	977	766	805	823	854	897	963
North	483	493	439	490	501	531	576	613	616	669	715	658	699	720	814	751	762	814	829	839	896
South	422	436	404	430	436	494	526	579	555	678	724	660	695	719	867	756	836	822	820	858	857
West	469	494	475	508	518	526	598	641	563	625	660	634	673	688	824	753	814	851	875	915	933
Statewide	455	473	437	474	491	513	574	612	567	646	694	643	689	718	872	757	805	828	847	881	909

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

Table D.15. Allocation of Reported State Share of Administrative Costs in Nominal Dollars (Thousands), FY 2000–2011, Massachusetts

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Certification	27,823	29,239	30,944	28,779	29,315	28,746	34,338	33,465	34,774	33,794	35,843	39,375
Issuance	1,837	1,747	1,726	1,657	1,792	1,573	2,093	1,939	1,983	2,405	2,700	2,758
Quality Control	2,091	2,561	2,305	1,611	983	1,344	2,081	1,948	2,055	1,664	1,978	1,754
Fraud	1,877	1,670	862	627	600	769	1,011	1,052	1,032	1,025	1,211	1,381
ADP Operations	538	502	390	356	371	324	268	291	295	325	731	2,111
ADP Development	1,360	694	45	0	0	0	442	1,572	1,790	1,428	1,566	121
Employment & Training	0	0	0	0	145	1,103	1,613	1,704	2,031	1,898	1,672	1,460
Outreach	233	247	212	0	0	28	17	150	55	55	125	286
Miscellaneous	596	612	594	426	385	420	544	572	615	622	628	605
SNAP Education	1,244	1,446	1,774	2,110	2,038	1,959	1,535	1,955	2,217	2,294	2,455	0
Unspecified Other	112	73	223	0	134	0	312	286	1,036	444	470	3,638
Total	**37,712**	**38,791**	**39,073**	**35,566**	**35,762**	**36,266**	**44,254**	**44,934**	**47,882**	**45,952**	**49,379**	**53,488**

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

Table D.16. Allocation of Reported State Share of Administrative Costs in 2005 Dollars (Thousands), FY 2000–2011, Massachusetts

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Certification	31,359	32,227	33,563	30,572	30,289	28,746	33,263	31,503	32,025	30,797	32,293	34,734
Issuance	2,070	1,925	1,872	1,760	1,851	1,573	2,027	1,825	1,826	2,192	2,433	2,433
Quality Control	2,357	2,823	2,500	1,711	1,015	1,344	2,016	1,834	1,893	1,517	1,783	1,547
Fraud	2,115	1,841	934	666	619	769	980	990	950	934	1,091	1,218
ADP Operations	607	554	423	378	383	324	260	274	271	296	658	1,862
ADP Development	1,533	765	49	0	0	0	428	1,480	1,648	1,301	1,411	107
Employment & Training	0	0	0	0	149	1,103	1,562	1,604	1,870	1,730	1,506	1,288
Outreach	263	273	229	0	0	28	17	141	51	50	113	252
Miscellaneous	671	675	644	453	398	420	527	538	566	567	566	533
SNAP Education	1,402	1,594	1,924	2,242	2,106	1,959	1,487	1,841	2,042	2,090	2,212	0
Unspecified Other	127	80	241	0	139	0	302	269	954	404	424	3,209
Total	**42,505**	**42,755**	**42,380**	**37,782**	**36,950**	**36,266**	**42,868**	**42,300**	**44,097**	**41,878**	**44,489**	**47,184**

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from the USDA FNS.

Notes: Adjustment for 2005 dollars is based on GDP deflators calculated by the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Costs reflect state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

APPENDIX E

SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES – UTAH

Table E.1. Trends in SNAP Participation and Economic Indicators, 2000–2011, Utah

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Average Number of Active Cases per Month	33,698	34,036	38,715	45,870	52,358	56,252	55,643	52,906	59,333	85,185	103,520	112,218
Average Number of Individual SNAP Recipients per Month	84,813	85,273	99,190	118,341	133,613	140,406	135,385	130,399	149,164	214,760	258,659	276,278
Average Monthly Unemployment Rate (Percentage)	3.6	4.4	5.8	5.6	5.0	4.1	3.0	2.6	3.5	7.6	8.0	6.7
Average Number of SNAP Recipients per Person Unemployed	2.1	1.7	1.4	1.7	2.1	2.6	3.5	3.7	3.1	2.0	2.4	3.1
Average Monthly Poverty Rate (Percentage)	7.6	9.1	10.2	9.5	10.9	10.2	10.6	9.7	9.6	11.5	13.2	NA
SNAP Program Access Index[a]	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.384	0.351	0.349	0.389	0.461	0.560	NA

Source: Participation is based on Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Utah DWS. Unemployment rates are from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Poverty rates from 2004 to 2010 are from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Briefs. Poverty rates from 2000 to 2003 are from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. Program Access Index (PAI) data are from USDA FNS.

Note: Data obtained from the Utah DWS begin in July 2000.

[a] PAI measures access by taking the average monthly number of SNAP participants over the course of a calendar year compared to the number of people in each state with income below 125 percent of the federal poverty level. A higher PAI indicates greater program access.

NA = not available.

Table E.2. Distribution of SNAP Participants, by Characteristic, 2000–2011, Utah

Participant Characteristic	Percentage of Average Monthly Caseload											
	2000[a]	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Individual Characteristics												
Age												
Younger than 18	53.9	53.4	53.9	53.7	53.4	52.9	52.3	53.3	54.1	53.5	52.2	51.1
18 to 59	40.0	40.5	40.8	41.6	42.0	42.5	42.8	41.5	41.0	42.5	44.0	44.9
60 and older	6.1	6.1	5.3	4.7	4.5	4.6	4.9	5.2	4.9	4.0	3.7	4.0
Race or Ethnicity												
White, not Hispanic	71.1	71.6	72.0	72.1	72.2	72.0	70.8	69.6	68.3	68.2	64.4	56.1
African American, non-Hispanic	3.5	3.5	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.6	4.0	4.1	3.9	3.4	3.2	2.9
Hispanic, all races	14.9	14.9	15.2	15.9	16.4	16.7	17.4	18.5	19.9	20.8	19.0	16.9
Other	10.5	10.0	9.4	8.8	8.2	7.7	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.5	7.1	6.6
Missing	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.3	17.4
Disabled	12.4	12.6	12.3	10.9	10.2	10.3	10.9	11.7	11.1	8.7	9.2	10.4
Household Characteristics												
Income												
TANF	20.2	19.1	17.5	16.3	14.8	13.1	9.8	7.2	7.0	6.6	1.6	0.2
SSI & Social Security	37.8	37.3	33.9	30.6	28.8	28.7	30.1	32.4	31.3	25.3	23.6	24.5
Earnings	33.8	32.6	33.3	33.9	35.2	35.5	35.3	36.7	37.2	35.8	34.7	34.3
Household Size												
1	38.8	39.3	37.7	37.3	38.2	39.9	42.2	41.6	40.4	40.5	41.7	43.0
2	19.9	19.8	19.8	19.7	19.4	19.3	18.7	18.3	18.2	18.0	17.6	17.4
3	16.7	16.5	16.8	16.7	16.5	16.0	15.6	15.8	16.0	15.8	15.4	15.0
4	12.1	11.8	12.5	12.7	12.5	12.1	11.4	11.8	12.1	12.0	11.8	11.4
5 or more	12.6	12.6	13.3	13.6	13.3	12.7	12.1	12.5	13.3	13.6	13.5	13.2

Participant Characteristic	Percentage of Average Monthly Caseload											
	2000[a]	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Benefit Amount[a]												
Less than $20	12.8	13.0	11.5	9.7	8.3	8.7	9.4	10.6	9.1	4.6	3.8	3.6
$20–$50	11.5	11.2	10.4	8.6	7.8	6.9	6.7	7.2	7.1	5.5	5.1	5.0
$51–$100	14.5	14.0	13.4	12.7	11.7	11.4	11.5	11.7	11.2	8.7	8.0	7.6
$101–$150	18.3	18.8	19.0	21.1	23.9	21.7	11.2	10.8	10.2	7.8	7.4	7.4
$151–$200	8.6	8.4	7.8	7.1	6.7	9.6	20.9	19.1	18.7	23.4	26.1	27.8
$201–$250	12.0	11.7	11.1	7.7	7.1	6.7	6.2	5.7	5.7	4.3	4.0	3.9
$251–$300	4.8	5.1	7.0	11.0	11.3	11.4	11.1	10.9	9.4	5.0	4.8	4.5
$301–$350	7.8	6.9	4.8	4.9	4.5	4.2	3.9	3.9	5.5	6.0	4.8	4.5
$351–$400	2.6	3.4	6.3	6.8	7.5	7.8	6.7	3.5	3.6	8.7	9.6	9.8
$401 or more	7.1	7.5	8.8	10.4	11.3	11.6	12.4	16.7	19.4	25.9	26.4	25.9
Length of Current Spell of SNAP Coverage												
Fewer than 6 months	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	32.4	31.6	31.5	34.7	36.8	30.8	29.0
6 months to 1 year	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	20.3	19.8	19.0	20.2	24.1	23.8	21.8
1 to 2 years	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	17.5	16.8	16.1	15.0	15.7	21.1	19.4
2 to 4 years	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	15.6	16.0	15.7	13.5	10.8	12.8	17.6
More than 4 years	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	14.2	15.8	17.8	16.6	12.6	11.5	12.1

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Utah DWS.

Note: Data begin in July 2000.

[a] The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act authorized increased SNAP benefit amounts effective in April 2009, so increases from 2008 to 2009 and from 2009 to 2010 are expected.

SSI = Supplemental Security Income, TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

NA = not available.

Table E.3. SNAP Participant Growth Rates, 2000–2011, Utah

Participant Characteristic	Average Monthly SNAP Participant Growth (Percent)											
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Individual Characteristics												
All SNAP Participants	0.5	1.1	17.6	40.3	58.4	66.4	60.5	54.6	76.8	154.6	206.6	227.5
Age												
Younger than 18	0.8	0.5	17.9	40.3	57.5	64.0	56.2	53.3	78.2	153.6	198.1	211.5
18 to 59	0.2	2.0	19.5	45.2	65.9	76.2	71.2	60.0	80.5	169.7	236.4	266.3
60 and older	0.4	-0.2	2.0	7.7	16.8	24.1	28.4	30.4	41.3	64.7	87.0	113.8
Race or Ethnicity												
White, non-Hispanic	0.5	1.8	19.1	42.3	60.7	68.4	59.8	51.3	69.9	144.1	177.8	158.5
African American, non-Hispanic	-1.0	1.4	11.6	25.6	46.6	71.7	81.3	78.8	96.9	146.3	175.4	168.2
Hispanic, all races	1.7	1.7	21.1	50.7	75.6	88.4	89.4	93.7	138.7	259.2	294.4	275.1
Other	0.0	-4.6	4.7	17.2	22.8	20.7	17.7	14.0	30.5	80.8	106.2	104.8
Missing	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Disabled	0.1	2.0	16.0	22.7	29.7	37.6	40.7	45.7	57.8	78.5	126.3	172.9
Household Characteristics												
All SNAP Households	0.5	1.5	15.5	36.9	56.2	67.8	66.0	57.8	77.0	154.2	208.9	234.8
Income												
TANF	1.6	-3.1	1.0	11.7	16.1	10.5	-18.6	-42.7	-38.3	-16.2	-75.0	-95.9
SSI & Social Security	0.1	-0.1	3.1	10.2	18.8	27.2	31.7	35.0	46.1	69.3	92.1	115.8
Earnings	0.3	-2.1	13.7	37.2	62.2	76.0	73.1	71.1	94.6	168.7	216.5	239.5
Benefit Amount[a]												
Less than $20	-3.0	-0.8	0.1	-0.6	-2.1	9.6	16.9	25.7	20.9	-11.6	-12.9	-9.3
$20–$50	-1.9	-3.1	2.4	0.0	3.8	-2.1	-4.9	-3.9	7.5	18.2	35.1	42.4
$51–$100	-0.1	-2.8	5.5	18.8	24.4	31.0	30.9	25.9	35.9	51.5	67.9	73.7
$101–$150	1.7	5.6	21.4	59.7	106.8	101.8	3.0	-5.8	0.0	10.2	26.7	36.9
$151–$200	-0.7	-2.5	2.7	11.1	19.7	84.8	297.3	245.0	280.6	583.3	824.6	965.6
$201–$250	3.3	1.8	9.2	-9.4	-5.5	-3.3	-11.4	-22.6	-14.3	-6.9	5.8	12.1
$251–$300	1.3	7.8	68.4	215.3	268.9	298.5	283.6	259.8	247.8	164.3	207.8	214.8
$301–$350	2.6	-8.6	-27.6	-12.9	-8.6	-8.0	-16.4	-20.2	28.0	99.2	93.1	95.7
$351–$400	-5.4	28.2	166.2	243.6	327.8	382.8	307.0	104.3	132.8	709.9	991.8	1,102.3
$401 or more	6.6	14.4	53.3	113.9	164.7	191.6	210.3	295.8	415.9	890.8	1,124.6	1,203.3

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Utah DWS.

Notes: Data begin in July 2000. Growth figures represent the percent change from the first month of data available to the average monthly caseload in each year.

[a] The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act authorized increased SNAP benefit amounts effective in April 2009, so increases from 2008 to 2009 and from 2009 to 2010 are expected.

SSI = Supplemental Security Income, TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

NA = not available.

Table E.4. Growth in SNAP Caseload, by Region and County Characteristics, 2000–2011, Utah

	Average Monthly SNAP Caseload Growth (Percent)											
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Statewide	0.5	1.5	15.5	36.9	56.2	67.8	66.0	57.8	77.0	154.2	208.9	234.8
Bear River	1.1	11.5	28.4	50.5	73.2	85.6	91.2	95.5	105.2	181.3	224.6	250.9
Castle Country	-1.5	0.1	12.1	34.3	48.1	47.7	36.9	39.4	36.4	63.3	79.8	88.0
Central Utah	2.3	7.0	20.2	32.9	45.1	49.4	51.7	51.1	68.1	120.6	153.5	165.2
Mountainland	1.3	6.0	31.1	58.5	80.2	90.3	78.8	73.4	108.3	209.9	281.5	311.5
Southeast	-0.5	-0.2	11.2	15.7	17.8	9.1	1.6	0.1	5.3	27.0	43.1	50.9
Southwest	5.2	5.6	15.6	29.5	39.8	43.8	32.9	38.5	78.5	177.1	253.2	297.9
Uinta Basin	-2.1	-6.3	0.6	7.1	5.8	-1.2	-16.5	-25.3	-24.3	23.1	49.1	53.4
WF North	1.2	1.5	18.2	40.1	61.3	75.9	81.6	74.6	83.8	146.6	196.1	225.0
WF South	-0.5	-0.8	10.3	34.3	57.5	74.1	74.1	59.2	80.7	167.1	228.1	254.4
County Characteristics[a]												
Rural counties	1.1	3.6	14.4	26.4	36.1	35.4	27.7	26.8	37.2	83.9	115.6	129.4
Urban counties	0.4	1.1	15.8	39.2	60.7	75.1	74.6	64.8	85.9	169.8	230.0	258.8

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Utah DWS.

Notes: Data begin in July 2000. Growth figures represent the percent change from the first month of data available to the average monthly caseload in each year.

[a] Counties are categorized as rural or urban based on U.S. Census Bureau classifications.

Table E.5. Application Approval Rates, 2000–2011, Utah

	Percentage Approved												
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
All Applications	64.5	64.2	67.9	69.2	69.6	71.7	69.5	65.4	64.8	63.8	56.3	56.1	62.7

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Utah DWS.

Notes: Data begin in July 2000.

Table E.6. Trends in Application Processing Time, 2000–2011, Utah

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Percentage Timely												
All applications	73.5	73.1	86.1	85.4	90.2	91.2	90.3	88.0	86.9	85.3	60.4	72.3
Expedited applications	82.0	83.5	93.1	95.1	97.6	97.8	97.5	96.6	96.0	94.6	53.3	85.7
Non-expedited applications	71.4	70.3	83.6	81.9	87.4	88.5	87.3	84.9	83.9	82.9	61.9	71.0
Application Processing Time (percentage of applications)												
Same day	6.2	5.6	8.9	12.4	28.9	33.8	33.9	26.3	26.6	26.5	14.3	22.2
1 to 7 days	34.4	36.1	42.8	40.2	26.8	24.6	23.0	25.0	24.9	22.1	17.3	23.8
8 to 15 days	15.9	15.3	14.4	12.8	11.9	12.2	11.8	11.9	12.2	12.9	9.8	11.4
16 to 23 days	9.4	9.0	10.6	8.5	7.0	6.6	6.6	7.3	7.5	8.1	6.9	7.1
24 to 30 days	10.7	10.3	11.0	12.6	16.3	14.7	15.6	18.3	16.5	16.4	14.3	8.5
31 to 60 days	22.0	22.1	11.4	12.8	8.8	7.8	8.6	10.6	11.4	11.0	22.0	23.0
More than 60 days	1.4	1.5	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.8	3.0	15.3	3.9
Average Processing Time (days)	19.2	19.4	14.5	14.1	12.9	12.3	13.3	15.8	16.9	21.5	41.1	21.4

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Utah DWS.

Notes: Data begin in July 2000.

Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and within 30 days for all other applications.

Table E.7. Application Submissions and Processing Time, by Urban or Rural Status, 2000–2011, Utah

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Rural Counties												
Percentage Timely												
All applications	75.8	81.2	91.7	91.6	93.0	93.0	93.3	90.2	88.4	85.3	61.0	72.7
Expedited applications	79.7	85.4	94.9	96.0	96.6	96.6	97.5	95.9	95.7	93.6	54.4	85.7
Non-expedited applications	74.7	79.9	90.6	90.2	91.8	91.9	92.0	88.7	86.8	83.7	62.1	71.5
Average Processing Time (Days)	20.5	16.8	13.0	13.0	13.0	12.7	14.7	17.4	18.1	23.4	40.9	21.3
Urban Counties												
Percentage Timely												
All applications	73.4	72.1	85.3	84.4	89.8	90.9	89.8	87.6	86.5	85.2	60.1	71.8
Expedited applications	82.3	82.9	92.7	94.9	97.7	97.9	97.4	96.7	96.0	94.6	52.6	85.7
Non-expedited applications	71.3	69.2	82.6	80.6	86.8	88.1	86.7	84.4	83.5	82.8	61.7	70.5
Average Processing Time (days)	18.9	19.8	14.8	14.3	13.0	12.5	13.2	15.7	16.9	21.4	41.6	21.7

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Utah DWS.

Notes: Notes: Data begin in July 2000.

Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and within 30 days for all other applications.

Counties are categorized as rural or urban based on U.S. Census Bureau classifications.

Table E.8. Trends in SNAP Participation Turnover, 2000–2012, Utah

	Percentage of New Enrollments												
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Average Monthly Number of New Enrollments	2,751	3,058	3,733	4,219	4,714	4,991	4,671	4,439	5,520	7,486	7,217	7,289	7,020
Number of Months Not Receiving SNAP Before Application													
1	NA	9.9	9.9	9.7	10.8	11.6	13.2	11.9	9.3	8.6	10.8	11.2	12.5
2	NA	5.6	5.7	5.5	5.9	6.4	7.3	6.8	5.5	4.7	6.1	6.6	7.9
3	NA	4.3	4.1	4.0	4.3	4.9	5.3	4.9	4.3	3.6	4.5	4.7	5.2
4	NA	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.8	4.3	3.9	3.4	2.8	3.6	3.7	4.6
5	NA	2.8	2.7	2.7	3.0	3.1	3.7	3.3	2.9	2.4	3.0	3.2	3.5
6	NA	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.9	3.1	2.6	2.0	2.3	2.9	3.0
More than 6	NA	7.8	16.7	21.3	22.8	24.6	26.9	31.6	33.9	30.6	23.6	24.6	24.3
Did not receive SNAP within data window	NA	63.9	55.2	50.9	47.1	42.9	36.4	34.4	38.0	45.2	46.1	43.1	39.0

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Utah DWS.

NA = not available.

Table E.9. Application Processing Time Before and After Implementation of Electronic Case Records and Call Center, by Areas with Early and Later Implementation, Utah

Characteristic	Former Central Region			Other Areas in Utah		
	2000	2001–2008	2009–2012	2000	2001–2008	2009–2012
All SNAP Households	20.5	14.6	29.3	19.1	14.9	28.0
Age of Head of Household						
Younger than 18	17.1	18.0	34.6	20.9	16.7	32.1
18 to 59	20.6	14.3	29.4	18.9	14.7	28.1
60 and older	21.2	18.7	21.6	23.8	19.5	20.2
Race or Ethnicity of Head of Household						
White, not Hispanic	20.2	14.4	29.9	18.7	14.5	28.4
African American, non-Hispanic	5.0	12.4	13.8	20.1	13.0	27.1
Hispanic, all races	24.5	17.2	28.6	19.0	16.4	28.0
Other	21.8	13.6	24.6	22.3	15.2	27.7
Missing	6.0	22.4	28.0	27.8	23.0	27.2
Benefit Amount[a]						
Less than $20	18.1	11.4	30.8	21.1	14.1	31.9
$20–$50	18.0	10.4	29.2	14.4	10.4	28.5
$51–$100	16.2	8.8	28.5	12.3	9.3	29.2
$101–$150	15.4	11.6	29.4	15.7	9.5	27.6
$151–$200	18.0	14.2	31.3	12.7	12.7	30.1
$201–$250	13.7	10.9	38.6	17.3	11.9	33.7
$251–$300	18.6	17.4	45.2	12.4	15.0	35.0
$301–$350	16.7	22.8	37.3	16.9	13.8	37.4
$351–$400	19.1	19.3	45.7	11.1	13.8	42.3
$401 or more	20.9	18.2	50.2	19.1	21.3	47.5

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Utah DWS.

Notes: Notes: Data begin in July 2000.

The former Central Region implemented electronic case records and a call center beginning in 2001 whereas other regions adopted these reforms later. This combination of initiatives did not spread to all areas of the state until 2009.

[a] The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act authorized increased SNAP benefit amounts effective in April 2009, so increases from 2008 to 2009 and from 2009 to 2010 are expected.

Table E.10. Application Approval Rates Before and After Implementation of Electronic Case Records and Call Center by Areas with Early and Later Implementation, Utah (percentages)

Characteristic	Former Central Region			Other Areas in Utah		
	2000	2001–2008	2009–2012	2000	2001–2008	2009–2012
All SNAP Households	63.7	73.0	59.6	65.6	67.8	58.3
Age of Head of Household						
Younger than 18	75.0	89.6	88.9	88.1	91.0	88.4
18 to 59	63.4	72.6	58.6	64.5	66.9	57.1
60 and older	62.1	66.6	52.2	68.8	65.8	54.1
Race or Ethnicity of Head of Household						
White, not Hispanic	64.1	73.4	61.1	65.1	67.9	60.1
African American, non-Hispanic	100.0	79.7	63.4	71.7	74.2	69.7
Hispanic, all races	56.1	71.7	60.5	66.6	68.4	61.7
Other	65.9	71.7	61.6	65.4	67.8	62.5
Missing	100.0	11.7	52.3	38.5	7.0	49.3

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Utah DWS.

Notes: Data begin in July 2000.

The former Central Region implemented electronic case records and a call center beginning in 2001 whereas other regions adopted these reforms later. This combination of initiatives did not spread to all areas of the state until 2009.

Table E.11. Allocation of Reported State Share of Administrative Costs in Nominal Dollars (Thousands), FY 2000–2011, Utah

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Certification	34,320	32,371	35,785	33,328	35,837	35,879	40,850	42,174	48,130	41,999	37,311	46,893
Issuance	1,716	2,104	2,585	3,072	4,646	4,142	4,046	4,012	3,468	3,454	3,569	4,648
Quality Control	519	453	226	225	137	27	13	250	506	374	365	466
Fraud	4,895	4,707	5,682	5,572	3,879	3,255	3,087	3,426	3,255	3,772	2,961	2,626
ADP Operations	7,763	4,701	6,638	7,326	6,576	7,597	5,046	4,524	4,875	4,994	7,267	6,191
ADP Development	210	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Employment & Training	552	614	191	223	254	215	237	246	253	261	5	1
Outreach	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	402	570	690	638
Miscellaneous	275	239	202	236	302	111	270	410	841	515	487	421
SNAP Education	954	918	2,650	2,655	882	375	0	6	527	720	1,279	0
Unspecified Other	7,207	6,470	7,367	7,106	5,267	2,671	2,494	2,806	3,922	3,259	3,450	3,147
Total	**58,411**	**52,576**	**61,327**	**59,744**	**57,780**	**54,273**	**56,044**	**57,870**	**66,179**	**59,919**	**57,384**	**65,032**

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from USDA FNS.

Notes: Costs reflect state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

Table E.12. Allocation of Reported State Share of Administrative Costs in 2005 Dollars (Thousands), FY 2000–2011, Utah

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Certification	38,682	35,679	38,814	35,405	37,027	35,879	39,571	39,702	44,326	38,276	33,616	41,366
Issuance	1,934	2,319	2,803	3,263	4,800	4,142	3,919	3,777	3,193	3,148	3,216	4,100
Quality Control	584	499	245	239	141	27	13	236	466	341	329	411
Fraud	5,518	5,188	6,163	5,919	4,008	3,255	2,991	3,225	2,998	3,438	2,668	2,317
ADP Operations	8,749	5,182	7,200	7,783	6,794	7,597	4,888	4,259	4,490	4,551	6,547	5,461
ADP Development	237	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Employment & Training	622	677	207	237	262	215	230	232	233	238	4	1
Outreach	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	371	519	621	562
Miscellaneous	310	263	220	250	312	111	262	386	775	469	439	372
SNAP Education	1,075	1,012	2,875	2,820	911	375	0	6	485	656	1,152	0
Unspecified Other	8,123	7,131	7,991	7,549	5,442	2,671	2,416	2,641	3,612	2,970	3,109	2,776
Total	**65,836**	**57,949**	**66,519**	**63,466**	**59,698**	**54,273**	**54,290**	**54,477**	**60,949**	**54,607**	**51,701**	**57,367**

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from USDA FNS.

Note: Adjustment for 2005 dollars is based on GDP deflators calculated by the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Costs reflect state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

APPENDIX F

SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES – WASHINGTON

Table F.1. Trends in SNAP Participation and Economic Indicators, 2000–2011, Washington

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Average Number of Active Cases per Month	140,416	152,647	177,578	207,056	234,600	264,787	278,988	281,451	307,188	408,787	501,624	562,091
Average Number of Individual SNAP Recipients per Month	309,748	332,062	378,004	428,997	478,086	527,164	547,534	549,334	597,931	816,574	983,777	1,077,703
Average Monthly Unemployment Rate (percentage)	5.1	6.2	7.3	7.4	6.2	5.5	5.0	4.5	5.5	9.4	9.9	9.2
Average Number of SNAP Recipients per Person Unemployed	2.0	1.8	1.7	1.8	2.4	2.9	3.3	3.6	3.2	2.5	2.8	3.4
Average Monthly Poverty Rate (percentage)	9.6	10.8	10.8	11.8	13.1	11.9	11.8	11.4	11.3	12.3	13.4	9.6
SNAP Program Access Index[a]	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.535	0.556	0.566	0.628	0.782	0.858	NA

Source: Participation is based on Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS. Unemployment rates are from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Poverty rates from 2004 to 2010 are from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Briefs. Poverty rates from 2000 to 2003 are from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. Program Access Index (PAI) data are from USDA FNS.

Note: Data from the Washington DSHS begin in July 2000.

[a] PAI, a measure calculated by FNS, represents a ratio of the average monthly number of SNAP participants over the course of a calendar year to the number of state residents with income below 125 percent of the federal poverty level. A higher PAI indicates greater program access.

NA = not available.

Table F.2. Distribution of SNAP Participants, by Characteristic, 2000–2011, Washington

Participant Characteristic	Percentage of Average Monthly Caseload											
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Individual Characteristics												
Age												
Younger than 18	47.2	46.5	45.4	44.1	43.0	41.9	41.6	41.5	41.4	41.5	40.4	39.5
18 to 59	44.6	45.4	46.6	47.7	48.7	49.8	49.9	49.6	49.8	50.7	51.9	52.6
60 and older	8.3	8.1	8.0	8.2	8.3	8.3	8.5	8.8	8.8	7.8	7.6	8.0
Race or Ethnicity												
White, not Hispanic	63.9	63.2	62.8	62.5	61.7	60.4	58.9	57.4	56.0	55.0	53.5	52.8
African American, non-Hispanic	9.8	9.5	9.2	8.9	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.5	8.3	7.6	7.4	7.4
Hispanic, all races	12.1	13.0	13.4	13.6	14.0	14.4	15.0	15.5	15.7	15.6	15.6	15.5
Other	12.8	12.6	12.4	12.2	12.3	12.4	12.6	12.8	12.9	12.6	12.6	12.6
Missing	1.4	1.8	2.2	2.7	3.3	4.0	4.9	5.8	7.1	9.2	10.9	11.8
Disabled	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	23.2	23.3
Household Characteristics												
Income												
TANF	31.1	29.0	24.7	21.7	19.7	17.6	15.5	14.4	13.9	12.9	11.7	9.3
SSI & Social Security	39.7	38.2	38.1	39.1	38.7	37.4	37.5	38.3	37.4	32.9	30.9	31.0
Earnings	24.5	23.8	23.5	23.0	23.4	23.2	22.0	21.6	22.3	26.2	26.9	27.6
Household Size												
1	46.9	47.9	49.8	51.9	53.3	55.2	56.0	56.5	56.8	55.0	56.4	57.9
2	20.5	20.3	19.6	18.9	18.6	17.8	17.9	17.7	17.6	17.8	17.3	17.0
3	14.4	14.2	13.7	13.0	12.6	12.1	11.9	11.8	11.7	12.0	11.7	11.3
4	9.4	9.1	8.8	8.4	8.2	7.8	7.5	7.4	7.4	8.0	7.8	7.3
5 or more	8.9	8.6	8.2	7.7	7.4	7.0	6.7	6.6	6.6	7.2	6.8	6.4
Benefit Amount[a]												
Less than $20	9.8	9.1	6.3	5.4	5.5	5.1	5.7	6.1	5.8	5.9	6.1	5.5
$20–$50	10.8	10.0	6.3	4.8	5.5	6.6	7.0	7.6	3.7	3.1	2.9	2.7
$51–$100	18.9	18.4	21.2	22.0	21.1	18.9	18.4	17.5	16.5	8.8	7.2	5.6
$101–$150	24.2	26.0	29.4	31.8	32.1	28.5	13.5	13.7	15.5	12.2	12.2	12.8
$151–$200	8.2	7.5	6.9	6.1	5.6	10.3	24.3	24.0	26.6	34.2	34.0	36.3
$201–$250	11.4	11.5	10.5	7.0	6.4	5.7	4.8	4.5	4.4	4.6	7.1	7.0
$251–$300	5.9	4.7	5.7	8.8	9.0	9.4	10.2	10.2	8.6	3.3	3.1	2.9
$301–$350	5.0	5.9	4.8	3.8	3.6	3.4	2.9	2.7	4.3	5.0	3.5	3.0
$351–$400	2.6	2.9	3.8	4.9	5.2	5.6	5.3	2.6	2.5	7.5	8.9	9.3
$401 or more	3.3	4.0	5.1	5.5	5.9	6.4	7.9	11.1	12.0	15.3	15.1	14.8

Participant Characteristic	Percentage of Average Monthly Caseload											
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Length of Current Spell of SNAP Coverage												
Fewer than 6 months	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	27.3	25.8	25.6	27.6	28.5	24.6	23.0
6 months to 1 year	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	21.5	20.6	19.7	19.9	23.7	22.1	20.8
1 to 2 years	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	18.4	17.9	17.0	16.0	16.8	21.7	19.8
2 to 4 years	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	17.4	18.3	17.6	15.9	13.5	15.1	19.8
More than 4 years	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	15.5	17.4	20.1	20.7	17.6	16.4	16.6

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS.

Note: Data begin in July 2000.

[a] The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act authorized increased SNAP benefit amounts effective in April 2009, so increases from 2008 to 2009 and from 2009 to 2010 are expected.

SSI = Supplemental Security Income, TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

NA = not available.

Table F.3. SNAP Participant Growth Rates, 2000–2011, Washington

Participant Characteristic	Average Monthly SNAP Participant Growth (Percent)											
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Individual Characteristics												
All SNAP Participants	1.2	8.4	23.4	40.1	56.1	72.2	78.8	79.4	95.3	166.7	221.3	252.0
Age												
Younger than 18	1.3	7.0	19.1	31.0	42.5	53.1	58.0	58.2	71.7	134.8	175.8	195.0
18 to 59	1.2	10.5	28.9	50.0	70.5	92.4	100.1	99.6	118.0	203.5	274.1	314.9
60 and older	0.5	5.2	18.6	38.3	56.3	71.5	82.4	91.0	107.0	149.6	195.7	237.0
Race or Ethnicity												
White, non-Hispanic	1.0	7.1	21.1	36.8	50.4	62.6	64.5	60.9	70.9	129.1	168.7	190.3
African American, non-Hispanic	1.5	5.5	17.3	28.9	40.2	53.2	59.2	56.6	66.3	109.2	144.6	166.1
Hispanic, all races	1.5	17.0	36.8	57.7	81.2	105.7	121.8	130.2	153.6	244.1	314.5	352.0
Other	0.7	5.9	18.8	33.3	49.1	66.6	75.3	78.4	95.2	161.4	213.7	244.0
Missing	7.1	43.9	104.1	187.8	290.7	422.2	554.9	686.2	950.3	1747.3	2544.1	3021.0
Household Characteristics												
All SNAP Households	1.4	10.2	28.2	49.5	69.4	91.2	101.4	103.2	121.8	195.2	262.2	305.8
Income												
TANF	-0.2	1.2	0.0	2.8	5.6	6.4	-1.2	-7.2	-2.4	20.3	34.4	19.8
SSI & Social Security	0.7	5.5	22.3	46.6	64.3	79.1	89.3	95.0	107.8	143.6	180.2	215.6
Earnings	1.9	7.5	23.9	41.4	62.6	82.0	82.2	80.1	103.2	217.7	299.5	359.8
Benefit Amount[a]												
Less than $20	-3.9	-2.6	-22.0	-21.8	-9.7	-4.5	10.9	19.7	24.9	67.8	113.5	116.2
$20–$50	-9.0	-8.8	-32.6	-40.2	-23.0	5.0	17.3	28.2	-31.4	-23.8	-12.4	-7.5
$51–$100	4.9	11.1	49.0	79.8	95.9	98.2	102.8	95.2	100.8	42.9	43.5	25.4
$101–$150	5.7	23.3	62.5	104.6	134.5	134.8	17.5	19.7	48.4	55.4	89.8	123.1
$151–$200	-2.1	-3.1	4.3	8.1	12.4	132.9	477.1	475.7	596.8	1090.5	1350.5	1638.0
$201–$250	2.8	13.0	19.6	-7.1	-2.8	-2.6	-14.1	-18.6	-13.5	21.4	127.7	150.9
$251–$300	-11.6	-22.1	8.4	95.3	126.0	166.7	206.5	209.4	184.8	45.8	65.5	75.9
$301–$350	25.4	60.3	51.0	41.0	51.9	57.9	44.4	34.7	134.5	260.0	208.5	201.7
$351–$400	1.7	21.7	88.1	180.7	237.3	311.2	308.8	101.5	114.0	757.7	1144.1	1357.1
$401 or more	7.4	44.2	111.9	165.1	226.2	300.0	418.2	633.7	762.6	1371.7	1683.3	1860.3

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS.

Notes: Data begin in July 2000. Growth figures represent the percent change from the first month of data available to the average monthly caseload in each year.

[a] The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act authorized increased SNAP benefit amounts effective in April 2009, so increases from 2008 to 2009 and from 2009 to 2010 are expected.

SSI = Supplemental Security Income, TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Table F.4. Growth in SNAP Caseload by Region and County Characteristics, 2000–2011, Washington

	Average Monthly SNAP Caseload Growth (Percent)											
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Statewide	1.4	10.2	28.2	49.5	69.4	91.2	101.4	103.2	121.8	195.2	262.2	305.8
Region 1	0.8	8.6	27.9	50.5	69.6	89.9	100.8	102.9	117.7	176.6	226.9	258.9
Region 2	1.2	13.6	25.9	43.3	64.9	89.8	110.2	117.4	135.8	196.3	249.7	280.4
Region 3	2.7	16.1	43.0	73.7	99.3	124.1	129.0	125.5	149.4	253.9	342.9	396.6
Region 4	1.3	9.6	29.8	52.2	74.0	96.6	102.5	96.2	110.9	186.5	262.7	314.6
Region 5	0.6	4.8	22.0	41.0	55.9	74.2	85.7	89.5	113.6	192.6	268.5	319.2
Region 6	2.2	10.9	29.8	52.2	72.2	95.6	107.7	117.1	137.5	210.9	275.4	319.4
County Characteristics[a]												
Rural counties	2.2	11.4	33.5	57.2	77.0	101.7	117.6	124.5	136.9	201.7	257.6	297.3
Urban counties	1.3	10.0	28.7	50.8	71.2	92.9	102.5	103.5	123.5	199.6	269.8	315.0

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS.

Notes: Data begin in July 2000. Growth figures represent the percent change from the first month of data available to the average monthly caseload in each year.

DSHS consolidated from six regions to three in January 2011. Data for 2011 is presented based on the six-region structure for continuity with previous years.

[a] Counties are categorized as rural or urban based on U.S. Census Bureau classifications.

Table F.5. Trends in Application Processing Time, 2000–2011, Washington

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Percentage Timely												
All applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	86.3	86.1	85.7	82.3	82.8	86.8	87.0
Expedited applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	85.2	85.5	85.2	83.6	83.8	86.5	86.2
Non-expedited applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	87.1	86.5	85.9	81.7	82.3	86.9	87.5
Application Processing Time (Percentage of Applications)												
Same day	10.1	12.6	18.8	23.1	20.6	19.9	18.1	17.2	14.1	17.1	33.7	36.5
1 to 7 days	32.8	36.1	39.5	35.9	36.9	38.0	37.9	37.0	33.9	32.1	24.8	23.0
8 to 15 days	20.3	19.0	15.1	14.4	14.5	15.3	15.7	15.7	15.2	14.9	13.1	12.9
16 to 23 days	12.5	10.5	8.1	7.9	8.3	7.7	8.3	8.8	10.5	10.2	6.7	6.2
24 to 30 days	17.5	16.0	11.8	10.0	10.6	10.7	11.1	11.9	13.7	13.7	12.9	13.2
31 to 60 days	6.1	5.2	6.1	8.0	8.5	7.8	8.4	8.9	11.9	11.3	8.4	8.1
More than 60 days	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.7	0.3	0.3
Average Processing Time (Days)	13.9	12.8	10.9	10.8	11.2	10.9	11.4	11.8	14.0	13.5	10.7	10.4

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS.

Notes: Processing time data begin in July 2000. Timeliness data begin in March 2005.

Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and within 30 days for all other applications.

NA = not available.

Table F.6. Application Processing Time, by Urban or Rural Status, 2000–2011 Washington

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Rural Counties												
Percentage Timely												
All applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	91.0	91.8	90.2	87.9	88.3	90.7	90.5
Expedited applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	90.9	91.4	89.7	88.3	87.9	89.3	89.6
Non-expedited applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	91.1	92.0	90.4	87.7	88.5	91.4	91.0
Average Processing Time (Days)	13.6	11.4	9.6	9.4	10.1	8.7	8.6	9.6	11.8	10.8	8.4	8.5
Urban Counties												
Percentage Timely												
All applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	85.6	85.2	85.0	81.5	82.1	86.2	86.5
Expedited applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	84.3	84.6	84.6	82.9	83.2	86.1	85.7
Non-expedited applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	86.4	85.6	85.2	80.7	81.5	86.3	87.0
Average Processing Time (days)	14.0	13.0	11.1	11.1	11.4	11.3	11.8	12.1	14.3	13.9	11.0	10.7

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS.

Notes: Processing time data begin in July 2000. Timeliness data begin in March 2005.

Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and within 30 days for all other applications.

Counties are categorized as rural or urban based on U.S. Census Bureau classifications.

NA = not available.

Table F.7. Trends in SNAP Participation Turnover, 2000–2012, Washington

	Percentage of New Enrollments											
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Average Monthly Number of New Enrollments	12,064	13,019	14,423	15,555	17,107	16,284	16,079	17,064	20,077	25,371	26,641	27,221
Number of Months Not Receiving SNAP Before Application												
1	NA	7.9	7.6	7.8	8.7	8.7	9.0	8.7	8.0	7.1	8.3	9.3
2	NA	4.7	4.4	4.6	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.3	4.9	4.2	4.6	5.2
3	NA	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.9	4.0	4.1	4.1	3.7	3.0	3.3	3.8
4	NA	2.8	2.8	2.8	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.3	3.1	2.4	2.6	3.0
5	NA	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.0	2.2	2.5
6	NA	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.4	2.4	2.3	1.7	2.0	2.3
More than 6	NA	6.0	13.9	17.6	20.7	23.0	24.1	25.4	28.8	25.4	22.2	22.6
Did not receive SNAP within data window	NA	70.9	63.7	59.6	53.6	50.9	48.8	48.1	46.4	54.2	54.8	51.3

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS.

NA = not available.

Table F.8. Allocation of Reported State Share of Administrative Costs in Nominal Dollars (Thousands), FY 2000–2011, Washington

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Certification	28,085	23,648	24,831	27,124	28,916	29,369	30,376	31,094	30,813	29,600	26,678	32,416
Issuance	730	1,810	1,864	1,877	2,553	2,674	3,135	3,257	3,554	3,608	3,286	3,983
Quality Control	1,996	2,053	2,068	1,934	2,045	1,855	1,319	1,574	1,756	1,566	1,731	1,450
Fraud	2,828	732	1,042	949	906	821	852	945	1,008	912	906	812
ADP Operations	4,055	3,619	3,374	3,505	4,137	3,809	3,883	4,477	4,536	4,638	4,780	5,611
ADP Development	114	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	276
Employment & Training	35	55	42	32	0	0	703	1,442	3,122	5,608	6,938	4,389
Outreach	1,126	1,463	1,800	2,357	2,960	2,618	2,860	2,771	1,709	2,213	1,967	1,707
Miscellaneous	815	733	751	726	828	776	827	867	857	950	875	865
SNAP Education	1,157	1,118	1,459	2,428	3,901	2,870	5,558	5,963	7,015	6,738	6,640	0
Unspecified Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**40,941**	**35,233**	**37,231**	**40,933**	**46,246**	**44,792**	**49,514**	**52,391**	**54,368**	**55,833**	**53,800**	**51,507**

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from USDA FNS.

Note: Costs reflect state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

Table F.9. Allocation of Reported State Share of Administrative Costs in 2005 Dollars (Thousands), FY 2000–2011, Washington

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Certification	31,654	26,065	26,933	28,814	29,876	29,369	29,425	29,271	28,377	26,975	24,036	28,595
Issuance	823	1,995	2,022	1,994	2,638	2,674	3,037	3,066	3,273	3,288	2,961	3,513
Quality Control	2,250	2,263	2,243	2,055	2,113	1,855	1,278	1,482	1,617	1,427	1,559	1,279
Fraud	3,187	807	1,131	1,008	936	821	826	890	928	831	816	716
ADP Operations	4,571	3,989	3,659	3,724	4,274	3,809	3,762	4,215	4,177	4,227	4,307	4,949
ADP Development	129	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	243
Employment & Training	39	61	46	34	0	0	681	1,357	2,875	5,111	6,251	3,871
Outreach	1,269	1,612	1,953	2,504	3,058	2,618	2,771	2,608	1,574	2,017	1,772	1,505
Miscellaneous	919	808	815	771	855	776	801	816	789	866	788	763
SNAP Education	1,304	1,233	1,583	2,580	4,031	2,870	5,384	5,614	6,461	6,141	5,983	0
Unspecified Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**46,145**	**38,834**	**40,383**	**43,483**	**47,781**	**44,792**	**47,964**	**49,320**	**50,071**	**50,883**	**48,472**	**45,437**

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data from USDA FNS.

Notes: Adjustment for 2005 dollars is based on GDP deflators calculated by the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Costs reflect state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

Costs reflect the state's share of administrative costs and exclude costs apportioned to FNS.

APPENDIX G

ALTERNATE SNAP APPLICATION TABLES, INCLUDING RECERTIFICATIONS –

FLORIDA AND WASHINGTON

APPENDIX G.1

ALTERNATE SNAP APPLICATION TABLES, INCLUDING RECERTIFICATIONS –

FLORIDA

Table G1.1. Application Approval Rates, by Method of Application Submission, Including Recertifications, 2001–2011, Florida

	Percentage Approved										
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
All Applications	80.6	82.0	81.3	79.8	84.0	79.4	79.9	81.5	83.2	85.9	86.2
SNAP Office											
Paper	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	85.6	85.6	87.2	88.0	89.7	90.2
Intranet[a]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	84.9	87.1	91.4
Other/Unknown	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mail	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	84.4	84.6	86.2	87.6	89.7	90.7
Fax	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	77.0	80.8	84.7	85.2	88.2	89.5
Telephone	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	88.4	88.1	88.2	92.1	93.5	93.1
Online[a]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	79.0	79.1	80.8	82.5	84.9	85.4
Community partner	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	82.6	84.6	86.2	87.1	89.0	89.0
Automatic transfer from SSI CAP	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	75.5	78.9
Other/Unknown	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	73.3	78.0	79.1	81.4	85.6	84.5

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Notes: Data on community partners begin in February 2006. Data on intranet submissions begin in September 2009.

[a] Florida's data system did not differentiate between intranet and Internet until 2009, so both methods are included in the "Online" row before then. From 2009 on, "Online" refers to Internet submissions only.

NA = not available.

n.a. = not applicable.

Table G.1.2. Trends in Method of Application Submission and Processing Time, Including Recertifications, 2001–2011, Florida

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Method of Application Submission (Percentage)											
SNAP office											
Paper	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	11.9	6.7	5.8	3.4	2.7	2.0
Intranet[a]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4.7	17.8	5.1
Other/Unknown	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mail	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	5.2	5.6	4.8	3.6	3.2	2.5
Fax	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.6	0.8	1.1	1.3	1.5	1.6
Telephone	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.8	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.2
Online[a]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	68.9	74.0	76.0	74.4	61.4	76.4
Community partner	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	0.6	2.2	3.3	4.2	4.8	5.9
Automatic transfer from SSI CAP	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Other/Unknown	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	12.1	10.3	8.7	7.9	8.2	6.3
Timeliness of Application Processing (Percentage)											
All applications	82.7	83.6	85.1	87.8	84.9	81.6	79.8	74.9	75.3	87.2	90.6
Expedited applications	59.6	60.7	64.2	72.9	65.4	51.5	49.4	50.8	55.7	82.2	90.5
Non-expedited applications	88.0	88.8	90.1	91.5	89.7	88.7	87.4	81.5	80.5	88.7	90.6
Application Processing Time (Percentage of Applications)											
Same day	22.3	22.0	22.6	24.5	19.4	13.4	11.1	11.6	12.2	13.3	14.0
1 to 7 days	22.8	22.1	23.0	28.5	29.9	24.8	24.0	22.8	23.8	30.3	31.5
8 to 15 days	20.1	20.6	20.4	17.8	17.6	18.1	15.9	16.9	15.9	14.1	14.1
16 to 23 days	14.1	14.2	13.8	11.8	12.5	15.3	13.5	12.8	12.1	12.4	11.6
24 to 30 days	9.5	10.7	11.3	9.7	10.9	17.4	23.2	18.9	18.5	20.3	21.0
31 to 60 days	10.3	9.7	8.6	7.3	9.0	10.3	11.7	16.6	17.2	9.5	7.6
More than 60 days	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.1	0.3
Average Processing Time (days)	13.3	13.1	12.6	11.1	12.6	15.2	16.6	17.0	16.7	14.2	13.8

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Notes: Data on community partners begin in February 2006. Data on intranet submissions begin in September 2009.

        Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and within 30 days for all other applications.

[a] Florida's data system did not differentiate between intranet and Internet until 2009, so both methods are included in the "Online" row before then. From 2009 on, "Online" refers to Internet submissions only.

NA = not available.

n.a. = not applicable.

Table G.1.3. Application Submissions and Processing Time by Urban or Rural Status, Including Recertifications, 2001- 2011, Florida

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Rural Counties											
Method of Application Submission (Percentage)											
SNAP office											
Paper	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	10.2	5.5	4.7	4.1	3.8	3.7
Intranet[a]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3.8	22.4	7.0
Other/Unknown	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mail	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	9.3	8.6	7.1	5.7	4.8	3.3
Fax	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1.1	1.7	2.4	2.2	2.7	2.5
Telephone	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1.0	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.1
Online[a]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	68.5	71.8	74.9	72.2	54.3	72.6
Community partner	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	1.2	2.7	3.4	4.0	4.9	5.8
Automatic transfer from SSI CAP	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Other/Unknown	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	8.8	9.1	7.2	7.8	6.9	4.9
Timeliness of Application Processing (Percentage)											
All applications	85.5	86.7	87.3	90.0	91.2	84.7	83.8	80.5	82.3	91.9	93.8
Expedited applications	60.8	62.8	65.3	74.8	77.7	58.5	52.6	54.9	60.9	87.1	92.5
Non-expedited applications	90.3	91.4	91.8	93.3	93.9	90.0	90.5	86.6	87.1	93.2	94.1
Average Processing Time (Days)	12.6	12.4	12.2	10.7	10.3	14.3	15.5	15.8	14.9	12.4	12.1
Urban Counties											
Method of Application Submission (Percentage)											
SNAP office											
Paper	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	12.0	6.8	5.8	3.4	2.6	1.9
Intranet[a]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4.8	17.5	5.0
Other/Unknown	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mail	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4.9	5.4	4.6	3.5	3.0	2.4
Fax	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.5	0.7	1.0	1.2	1.5	1.5
Telephone	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.8	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.2
Online[a]	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	68.9	74.1	76.1	74.5	61.9	76.7
Community partner	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	0.5	2.1	3.2	4.2	4.8	5.9
Automatic transfer from SSI CAP	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	NA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Other/Unknown	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	12.4	10.4	8.8	7.9	8.3	6.4
Timeliness of Application Processing (Percentage)											
All applications	82.5	83.4	85.0	87.6	84.5	81.3	79.5	74.5	74.8	86.9	90.4
Expedited applications	59.5	60.6	64.2	72.8	64.7	51.0	49.2	50.6	55.3	81.9	90.3
Non-expedited applications	87.8	88.6	90.0	91.3	89.4	88.6	87.2	81.2	80.1	88.4	90.4
Average Processing Time (days)	13.3	13.2	12.6	11.2	12.7	15.3	16.6	17.1	16.8	14.3	13.9

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Notes: Data on community partners begin in February 2006. Data on intranet submissions begin in September 2009.

Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and within 30 days for all other applications.

Counties are categorized as rural or urban based on U.S. Census Bureau classifications.

[a] Florida's data system did not differentiate between intranet and Internet until 2009, so both methods are included in the "Online" row before then. From 2009, "Online" refers to Internet submissions only.

NA = not available.

n.a. = not applicable.

Table G.1.4. Application Timeliness, by Method of Application Submission, Including Recertifications, 2006–2011, Florida

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Percentage of Applications Processed Timely						
SNAP Office						
Paper	87.6	85.8	83.2	81.7	88.5	90.8
Intranet[a]	NA	NA	NA	73.2	86.0	91.3
Other/Unknown	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mail	89.9	88.8	85.5	86.3	93.0	95.4
Fax	83.7	83.2	81.9	84.2	91.5	93.6
Telephone	97.5	91.6	83.7	85.7	91.4	94.7
Online[a]	78.5	77.2	72.1	73.2	86.8	90.0
Community partner	69.8	71.6	67.8	71.5	88.1	91.3
Automatic transfer from SSI CAP	NA	NA	NA	NA	87.2	92.3
Other/Unknown	89.1	90.0	89.6	88.9	88.3	93.9
Percentage of Applications Processed Same Day						
SNAP Office						
Paper	17.7	13.4	13.7	13.3	12.8	13.2
Intranet[a]	NA	NA	NA	8.5	12.3	18.5
Other/Unknown	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mail	14.3	10.1	10.3	14.7	14.6	15.2
Fax	12.2	11.0	12.4	14.0	14.8	14.8
Telephone	69.7	49.1	29.7	22.8	28.8	38.6
Online[a]	6.9	7.1	8.0	9.1	10.7	11.2
Community partner	5.4	6.6	8.5	11.4	15.2	14.1
Automatic transfer from SSI CAP	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	27.4	30.7
Other/Unknown	42.5	37.9	42.3	40.7	33.0	43.6

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Notes: Data on community partners begin in February 2006. Data on intranet submissions begin in September 2009.

        Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and within 30 days for all other applications.

[a] Florida's data system did not differentiate between Intranet and Internet until 2009, so both methods are included in the "Online" row before then. From 2009 on, "Online" refers to Internet submissions only.

NA = not available.

APPENDIX G.2

ALTERNATE SNAP APPLICATION TABLES, INCLUDING RECERTIFICATIONS –

WASHINGTON

Table G.2.1. Trends in Application Processing Time, Including Recertifications, 2000–2011, Washington

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Percentage Timely												
All applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	86.9	86.5	86.0	82.9	83.3	87.2	87.7
Expedited applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	85.2	85.4	85.0	83.5	83.8	86.8	86.7
Non-expedited applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	87.9	87.2	86.6	82.5	83.1	87.5	88.2
Application Processing Time (Percentage of Applications)												
Same day	10.8	13.1	19.3	23.2	21.2	20.4	18.5	17.3	14.5	17.6	34.8	38.2
1 to 7 days	34.4	37.2	40.3	37.0	37.9	38.6	38.1	37.3	34.3	32.5	25.2	23.4
8 to 15 days	20.4	19.2	15.5	14.9	14.9	15.5	16.1	16.3	15.6	15.3	13.2	12.7
16 to 23 days	12.1	10.3	8.0	7.7	8.1	7.7	8.4	8.9	10.5	10.2	6.6	6.0
24 to 30 days	15.9	14.6	10.7	9.2	9.6	10.0	10.5	11.3	13.1	12.9	12.0	12.0
31 to 60 days	5.8	5.0	5.6	7.4	7.8	7.4	8.0	8.5	11.3	10.8	7.9	7.3
More than 60 days	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.3	0.2
Average Processing Time (Days)	13.3	12.3	10.5	10.4	10.7	10.6	11.1	11.5	13.6	13.2	10.2	9.7

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS.

Notes: Data from 2000 begin in July 2000. Data for timeliness begin in March 2005.

Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and within 30 days for all other applications.

NA = not available.

Table G.2.2. Application Processing Time, by Urban or Rural Status, Including Recertifications, 2000–2011 Washington

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Rural Counties												
Percentage Timely												
All applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	91.2	91.9	90.3	88.1	88.4	90.9	90.8
Expedited applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	90.8	91.3	89.5	88.0	87.7	89.4	89.7
Non-expedited applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	91.5	92.2	90.7	88.2	88.8	91.7	91.5
Average Processing Time (Days)	13.0	11.0	9.3	9.0	9.7	8.5	8.4	9.4	11.5	10.6	8.1	8.1
Urban Counties												
Percentage Timely												
All applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	86.2	85.7	85.4	82.0	82.6	86.7	87.2
Expedited applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	84.4	84.4	84.3	82.8	83.3	86.4	86.3
Non-expedited applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	87.3	86.4	86.0	81.6	82.3	86.9	87.8
Average Processing Time (days)	13.4	12.5	10.6	10.6	10.8	10.9	11.5	11.9	14.0	13.5	10.5	10.0

Source: Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS.

Notes: Data from 2000 begin in July 2000. Data for timeliness begin in March 2005.

Mathematica calculated application processing timeliness based on submission dates and determination dates from state files, and the results might differ from the official FNS QC measure of timeliness. The application records data provided by states do not identify applications denied due to a household's failure to complete an interview or provide requested verification documentation, so these applications were included in our calculation of timeliness. Eligibility determinations are considered timely if they are made within 7 days for expedited applications and within 30 days for all other applications.

Counties are categorized as rural or urban based on U.S. Census Bureau classifications.

NA = not available.

APPENDIX H

STATE MODERNIZATION CHANGES IN STUDY STATES

Appendix Table H.1. Key Modernization Changes in Study States

Modernization Initiatives	SNAP Life Cycle Stages[a]				States				
	Application	Certification	Recertification	Case Management	FL	GA	MA	UT	WA
Restructuring of Administrative Functions									
Process-based Model	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Specialization of Staff for:									
Processing online applications	X					X*	X*		
Conducting interviews or determining eligibility		X	X		X	X*			X
New versus ongoing cases	X	X	X	X		X*	P		X
Case maintenance				X	X				X
Call Center	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Telecommuting	X	X	X	X	X	X[1]		X	
Expanding Applications of Technology									
Online Tools for Applicants/Clients									
Online Screening Tool	X				X	X	X	X	X
Online Application	X				X	X	X	X	X
Online Chat	X	X	X	X				X	
Online Account Functionality									
Benefit information		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Change reporting				X	X	X		X	X
Document uploading		X	X	X	X	P			
Online Recertification			X		X	X		X	X
Document Imaging	X	X	X	X	X	P		X	X
Electronic Case Files	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
Computer System Changes for SNAP Workers									
Workflow management tools	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
Eligibility determination system		X	X				X	X	

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[1] In Georgia, telecommuting was limited to call center staff.

Modernization Initiatives	SNAP Life Cycle Stages[a]				States				
	Application	Certification	Recertification	Case Management	FL	GA	MA	UT	WA
Partnering with Community Organizations									
Partners Conduct Outreach	X				X	X	X	X	X
Partners Offer Access to Online Application	X				X	X	X	X	X
Formal Contracts or MOUs	X				X	X	X		X
Some Partners Compensated	X				X	X	X		X
Policy Simplification									
Shortened or Simplified Application	X						X	X	X
Shortened Interviews		X	X		X	X			X
Waiver of Face-to-Face Interviews (at application and recertification)		X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Interview Scheduling Requirement Waived		X	X					X	X
Interview Postponed for Expedited Cases		X			X	X			
Interviews at Alternating Recertifications			X		X	X			
Combined Application Project	X	X			X		X		X
Broad-based Categorical Eligibility		X	X		X	X	X		X
Other Eligibility Simplifications (including excluding certain types of income or assets, standard deductions, removed conditions)	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Reduced Verification Requirements		X	X		X	X	X		X
Automatic Denials If No Response to Verification Request		X				X	X		
Simplified Reporting				X	X	X	X	X	X
Extended Certification Period			X				X		
Recertification Interviews Waived for Elderly and Disabled			X		X		X		

[a] Some modernization initiatives might be relevant to different stages of the life cycle in different states.

P = Pilot

MOU = memorandum of understanding; SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

APPENDIX I

STATE PROFILES

APPENDIX I.1

STATE PROFILE – FLORIDA

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PROFILE OF SNAP MODERNIZATION INITIATIVES IN FLORIDA

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Summary and Key Features

Florida's modernization efforts began in response to 2003 state legislation requiring the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to reduce administrative costs and staff for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Medicaid. The resulting modernization efforts involved a variety of statewide changes to Florida's SNAP eligibility system, many of which were implemented in 2004 and 2005. Key changes include staff restructuring and implementation of a call center with an interactive voice response (IVR) system; technological expansions such as online applications and accounts and document imaging; partnerships with community organizations to assist with the application process; and policy changes such as telephone interviews, shortened interviews, and reduced documentation requirements. Since implementing these changes, Florida has experienced both decreasing administrative costs and improved payment accuracy. This profile captures modernization initiatives in Florida as of early 2012. At the end of this profile, Table I.1.1 and Figure I.1.1 provide a summary and timeline of modernization activities in Florida.

Background on SNAP in Florida

SNAP is state-administered in Florida. DCF oversees administration of SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid under the umbrella of Automated Community Connection to Economic Self Sufficiency (ACCESS) Florida programs. The administrative structure includes 20 circuits—each spanning one or more counties—within six regions.[1] Florida's SNAP caseload was more than 1.8 million households (about 3.3 million individuals) as of December 2011, up from more than 431,000 households in 2000. In the same month, the state received almost 104,000 initial applications.[2]

Modernization Activities

Restructuring of Administrative Functions

- **Call center.** Three call centers (known as Customer Call Centers in Florida), are located in Tampa, Miami, Jacksonville. They can be reached via a single toll-free telephone number that routes through the Automated Response Unit (ARU). Clients mainly use the call center to obtain general and case-specific information, and report changes to their household status. The call center also conducts interviews for postponed expedited applicants in all regions, clients who report difficulty reaching their local office for an interview, and clients in one region that dedicated staff positions to the call center for that purpose. A fourth location operated in Ocala for 18 months using federal American

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[1] Circuits are the smallest administrative unit. In Florida, local office operations are administered at the circuit level, rather than at the county level, in order to align with judicial circuit courts. Circuits are composed of from one to seven counties, which may or may not have local offices. Some local offices consist of backroom operations only and are not open to clients.

[2] Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Florida DCF.

Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) funds; some workers were retained as virtual call agents when the location closed.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* Social Security Income (SSI), TANF, Refugee Assistance Program (RAP), and Medicaid

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* Tampa and Miami locations were operational beginning in 2002 as change-reporting centers; assistance with general and case-specific inquiries and Jacksonville location added in 2004

- **IVR unit.** The call center includes an ARU computerized "phone tree" system that uses numbered telephone menus to provide automated answers to common questions, including a customer's benefit amount, application status, information required to complete the case, and appointment time. Callers with questions that cannot be answered by the ARU can elect to transfer to a live call agent. Implementation of the ARU permitted callers anywhere in the state to dial a single toll-free number; previously, clients dialed the call center location in their designated area. The ARU received an average of 4.98 million calls per month in 2011 (approximately 163,000 calls per day).

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* SSI, TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2005

- **Staff specialization and centralization.** DCF shifted from a model in which a single caseworker was responsible for all SNAP activities—for example, determining eligibility, monitoring, processing changes, and fielding inquiries—for a given case to a process-based model in which specialized staff are responsible for different activities. Eligibility workers in local offices focus on intake and recertification (most workers specialize in interviewing or processing); Case Maintenance Units (CMUs) monitor cases between intake and recertification based on client information from external data exchanges, process alerts pertaining to information stored in the eligibility system, and apply and lift sanctions. Call centers (described separately) receive and process questions and changes from clients. The degree to which a staff function is centralized across offices can vary by circuit and region. For example, four of the state's regions chose to have circuit-level interview units. One of the state's regions placed staff under the call center umbrella to conduct most client interviews necessary for that region. CMUs operate at the regional level across the state. Administrator roles for training, policy oversight, and technical assistance were regionalized. In addition to these changes, DCF reinstated a designated case reviewer position in order to reduce error rates. Senior eligibility workers check the accuracy of a set number of cases per month, mentor specialized eligibility processors as they encounter mistakes, and inform training needs. This designated position existed in the mid-1990s, but the responsibility was folded into the supervisor's role during the intervening years.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* CMU began in two areas in 2002; regional program offices in 2004; staff specialization in 2005; and circuit interview units in 2009

- **Office closures.** DCF closed and consolidated many traditional local offices to reduce program costs. By 2012, 67 local offices were open statewide across Florida's 67 counties, down from 145 in 2004 (this includes the addition of new storefront locations, described separately), with more offices potentially closing in the future.[3] DCF sought to close offices that would enable it to achieve financial savings (for example, it had less incentive to close offices in a state-owned building). To support access for clients, DCF also attempted to close offices in close proximity to other offices, and when it did close an office, it typically sought to enlist community partners in the same neighborhood.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* offices began closing in 2004

- **Lobby area redesign.** Lobby areas of local offices were redesigned to include self-service equipment for clients to use in managing their case. Lobbies include computer stations with privacy screens for clients to access the online application and accounts; copy machines with fax and scan functions to submit documentation or upload documents to their accounts; and telephones to reach the call center (all offices have at least one telephone that directly connects to the call center). Some lobbies also contain drop boxes for clients to drop off documents. DCF created a new clerical-level staff position called "meeter-greeter" to direct walk-in clients to available resources and assist with basic noneligibility questions. The goal was for clients walking in to be able to self-serve with minimal assistance.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2004

- **Creation of storefronts.** DCF created community storefronts to replace many traditional offices that had closed. Storefronts contain the same self-service equipment as lobbies in traditional local offices, including computers, telephones, copiers, printers, and fax machines. They differ from traditional local offices in that they do not house eligibility staff—that is, storefronts are essentially freestanding office lobbies. The storefront term was adapted because such offices are usually in strip mall locations and are smaller in size than traditional offices and contain self-service equipment.

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[3] Mathematica calculations are based on data presented in Cody et al. (2008) and office listings on the DCF website as of August 2012.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* 2006

- **Telecommuting.** The state encourages experienced eligibility workers with high-speed Internet access to work from home after signing a telecommuting agreement. Telecommuting began as a regional- and circuit-level decision. In December 2009 all circuits had some ACCESS staff telecommuting. In 2011, DCF set a goal of having 75 percent of all eligibility workers throughout the state telecommute and worked to make telecommuting one of the top requirements in job postings. Clerical staff in lobbies or those who use document imaging or other equipment, as well as new staff in training, would continue to work from offices.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, Medicaid, and RAP

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2006

- **Restructuring quality control/assurance.** DCF undertook a reorganization that (1) moved QC from the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to the ACCESS program office umbrella and united QC with Quality Assurance (QA) under a new ACCESS Quality Management (QM) division; and (2) established regional QA teams. The main functions served by QM are prevention (QA) and detection (QC). Moving QC out of the OIG has led the QC unit to take on a less investigative role and provide more input and support to prevent errors. Previously, all QA staff were centralized at state headquarters and teams travelled throughout the field. DCF switched to regional QA teams to reduce their travel costs and better connect QA reviewers to the field. QA staff stationed in regional offices review performance of all ACCESS programs; communicate, coordinate, and monitor local performance; and relay the information to the QA unit in state headquarters. The state unit combines the local information with state monitoring to analyze statewide performance, recognize trends, and anticipate problems at the earliest possible stage.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* QM unit created in 2007

- **Restructuring fraud prevention and benefit recovery.** DCF restructured its ACCESS Integrity (fraud prevention) and Benefit Recovery (overpayment collections) programs into a new Public Benefits Integrity division within DCF. ACCESS Integrity, an extension of DCF's eligibility process, seeks to identify probable error-prone cases at all stages. When a case is identified as meeting error-prone criteria, it is referred to the ACCESS Integrity unit within the circuit where the public assistance recipient resides. The circuit-level ACCESS Integrity unit then reviews the information provided and

verifies and documents the findings. The recipient is then given an opportunity to explain contradictory information and an eligibility determination is made. Benefit Recovery focuses on collecting overpayments. Both ACCESS Integrity and Benefit Recovery units were formerly under the ACCESS umbrella, but were moved to the purview of the assistant secretary for Operations to give fraud investigators more independence from ACCESS operations.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* 2011

- **Customer Information and Support Services unit.** DCF's headquarters office implemented a Customer Information Support Services (CISS) unit to assist customers who contact the headquarters office by phone or email. One goal of the CISS unit is to reduce repeat client contacts. CISS workers respond to a variety of SNAP queries, such as requests for information about benefit status, receipt of pending documentation, and assistance unlocking online accounts, as well as information on other DCF services and services of other Florida agencies. Workers aim to address client questions themselves and only send queries to eligibility workers in the field if necessary.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, Medicaid, DCF family safety programs, and programs in other Florida agencies, including the Department of Health, the Agency for Health Care Administration, the Agency for Workforce Innovation, and the Department of Revenue.

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2011

Expanding Applications of Technology

- **Online application.** The ACCESS Florida online application system enables customers to apply for SNAP (and other programs) online. SNAP office lobbies have computer terminals with privacy screens available for this purpose. Clients can also apply from home, community partner sites, or any other location with Internet access. The online application is available in English, Spanish, and Creole. Applicants can set up a password to save an incomplete application and return to complete it later. Applications are submitted electronically with an e-signature. Clients can also sign in to add comments to an application after they have applied their e-signature. As of late 2011, approximately 90 percent of applications were submitted online. Florida used ARRA funds to support its online system.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* intranet-only application, Internet-accessible version and e-signature launched 2005

- **Online account.** SNAP recipients can set up an online account (referred to as a My ACCESS Account) to submit changes related to their household circumstances, recertify, and apply for additional assistance programs. Clients can view their current benefit amount and benefit history for the past 12 months, the date and type of documents they have submitted, verifications needed, and appointment times. Clients can also upload requested documents directly to their account and request a temporary Medicaid card or a replacement card as needed. (Clients manage their electronic benefits transfer (EBT) account information through the EBT vendor's website). The change-reporting enhancement replaced DCF's Reported Changes System (RCS), a statewide web-based system launched in 2006 for clients to report the following changes in their household circumstances: contact information (address and telephone number), household composition, shelter and utilities, employment, income, or case closure.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* accounts launched in 2008; list of documents submitted added in 2009; recertifications and change-reporting added in 2010; document upload added in 2011

- **Online screening tool.** The ACCESS Florida online system includes a screening tool that calculates a household's potential SNAP eligibility.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2007

- **Document imaging.** DCF uses a document imaging system to scan new paper documents and store all client documentation electronically. Historical case files were scanned into the system so that all client records are electronic. The document imaging system includes documents from three additional sources: documents faxed by clients or partners, documents clients scan and upload to their online account, and screenshots of verification that workers capture from websites such as one reporting unemployment compensation. There are currently 26 categories of documents, such as birth certificate. Clerical staff link each piece of verification to individuals (rather than cases). Scanned document images can be viewed from any computer inside the DCF firewall with access to the intranet. There are two components to document imaging: the Document Scanning System, a software program loaded onto the computer used to scan documents, and the ESS Document Viewing System, a web-based application that users access to view documents. Florida used ARRA funds to support document imaging. During the data collection period, scanning was centralized at the regional level in two of the six regions and at the circuit level elsewhere. The scanning of inbound mail and indexing scanned and other electronic documents will be centralized at the state level in

mid-2012, in preparation for privatizing these functions in fall 2012. Paper applications or verification documents that clients drop off will continue to be processed at local offices.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* 2006

- **ACCESS Management System.** The web-based ACCESS Management System (AMS) integrates Florida's legacy eligibility system (FLORIDA) and multiple stand-alone systems, including the online application and account systems. To date, AMS includes client registration, work management, and application entry modules. Functionality includes comprehensive inboxes, appointment scheduling, client notification, automated routing of work, and round-robin assignment. A Worker View enables DCF workers to view information on a client's application to determine if the client is eligible for expedited services and to use as a reference when conducting interviews or entering data in the state system. With the work management phase, AMS replaced the Intake Management System (IMS), which had previously tracked applications and included staff assignment, reporting, and search functions. The application entry module enables AMS to electronically import data from the mainframe eligibility system, eliminating the need for manual data entry and thereby reducing the number of key strokes and time required to process applications. The final phase, an eligibility determination module, is in progress. When complete, workers will no longer have to work directly in FLORIDA, although it will continue to operate in the background.

  - *Status:* two of four phases implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* regional rollout, now statewide

  - *Timeline:* Worker View functionality introduced in 2004, IMS 2005, AMS client registration module 2007, work management module 2009; application entry module 2012; eligibility determination module (in development)

- **Quality Management System.** Florida's electronic case-reading tool, Quality Management System (QMS), is used by local staff who review cases and by supervisors to measure worker, unit, circuit, regional, and state performance; look for trends in an effort to find program pitfalls before they become problematic; and plan corrective action and training. The upgraded system enables profiling of error-prone cases. Florida upgraded QMS from an older version launched in 2001, which predated its modernization efforts.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* launched in 2001, upgraded 2008

- **Data & Reports system.** The initial release of the Data & Reports system (D&R) included aggregated and detailed reports of data extracted from the legacy eligibility system (FLORIDA). This included pending work (for example, pending alerts, applications, redeterminations, changes, data exchanges, and so on) and completed work. The D&R system has been expanded to link multiple databases (including AMS, FLORIDA, online applications, the call center and IVR, and community partners) and includes more than 200 reports on all of the major functions related to public assistance eligibility operations. Staff use these reports to monitor status and performance at individual, supervisory unit, circuit, regional, or state levels. For example, supervisors can view the status of interviews assigned to a particular supervisee or all supervisees, or the entire circuit. For each aggregated summary report in D&R, there is a corresponding detailed report that lists the specific records. Some reports are available daily, others weekly or monthly.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* upgraded in 2005

- **Community Partner Tracking System.** The Community Partner Tracking System (CPTS) stores information on community partners, the services they provide, their location, and so on. The CPTS is also used to assign incoming public assistance applications to the correct processing center based on the partner site from which they originated. It can also track how many applications come from a partner through the partner's web address. This system replaced the Community Partner Network Database, which was launched in 2006 to track partners.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* Community Partner Network Database launched in 2006, replaced with CPTS in 2007

- **Community partner search tool.** The Community Partner Search Engine is an online system that enables clients to conduct a search for community partners serving their geographic area. Clients can get lists of partners by zip code or county and view information about each partner (for example, ACCESS services provided, contact information and hours of operation). The search engine is driven by extracts from the CPTS.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2008

- **Electronic notifications.** DCF received an FNS waiver permitting the agency to send electronic notifications with alerts via email or text message. Emails and texts notify clients that a new notification is available in their My ACCESS account. Clients who elect to receive electronic notifications no longer receive a notification in the mail. Clients must make this election themselves, through their online accounts, and they receive a mailed notice confirming their status change. If a notice is sent to an invalid email address, the delivery method is automatically switched to mail. DCF's goal in offering electronic notifications is to reduce the costs associated with mailing notices, including paper and postage.

  - *Status:* partially implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* waiver received in 2011; email alerts implemented in 2012; text alerts in development

- **Client notice redesign.** The client notice redesign project was a statewide initiative that included major format and text changes to approximately 130 notices of case action. Notices were moved from the FLORIDA mainframe legacy system into web-based software.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2009

- **Data store.** FLORIDA Operational Data Store (FLODS) is a relational database developed by Oracle, from which data are extracted from legacy databases on a nightly basis. FLODS supports various web applications, including My ACCESS Account and AMS. FLODS contains 11.5 million public assistance cases, 17 million individuals, 16 million new applications, 50 million different eligibility budget records, and 17 million benefit records.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2008

- **Online account portal for partners.** A partner portal for the My ACCESS online account system enables partners to log in to view select case information on their clients (clients must have signed a permission form within 90 days and be present). Through this portal, partners can view current benefit amounts, benefit account history, the date benefits will be available, a list of requested verification, the next recertification deadline, appointment times, and client contact information. DCF limits use of this tool, however, due to concerns about client confidentiality.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* 2009

- **Electronic partner portal.** The ACCESS electronic portal enables community partners to provide a single point of entry for customers to apply online for an array of federal, state, and local services, including SNAP, at the same time. The electronic portal is currently used by Tenet Hospitals' Rapid Application for Medical Programs and will be used by Memorial Healthcare Services' Application & Imaging Manager product.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* regional: Tenet Hospitals are located in Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties; Memorial Healthcare Services is in Broward County

  - *Timeline:* 2009

Partnering with Community Organizations

- **Application assistance and access.** DCF created an ACCESS community partner network to supplement access and support to clients in order to mitigate office closures and staff reductions. As of March 2012, 3,344 partners were enrolled. Partners enroll as one of three types: (1) information sites offer basic information about ACCESS programs and disseminate brochures; (2) self-service sites offer self-service equipment including computers with Internet access, copy and/or fax machines, and telephones; and (3) assisted-service sites offer information, self-service equipment, and knowledgeable staff who can provide assistance. All partners have paper applications available upon client request. Partner locations include hospitals and county health departments, churches, libraries, food banks, nursing homes, workforce centers, and other agencies that serve the same client populations as DCF. Some partner sites are open to the general population; others, such as medical providers, offer services only to the customers they already serve. Clients can learn of partners though DCF's website, handouts in storefronts or office lobbies, or word of mouth. Partnerships are formal and require a memorandum of understanding and monitoring. Circuit-level community partner liaisons train partner staff, provide technical assistance, and oversee partners through routine monitoring visits, with the level of support and monitoring based on the type of site. Assisted sites are required to participate in certain training, and are often the most reliant on technical assistance, whereas self-service sites receive minimal training and technical assistance. DCF has provided initial in-kind support, such as computers, to some partners; several regions provide ongoing monetary payments (up to $134 per day) to a small number of partners (75 as of March 2012) through formal fee agreements.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2005

- **Fee-based eligibility worker placements.** Under this initiative, partners contribute 50 percent of the salary and benefits of an eligibility worker who can be outstationed at a partner site or DCF location, as well as work space and equipment for those at partner sites. DCF funds the remaining 50 percent, and hires, places, trains, and supervises the workers. DCF plans to modify the funding structure to a fee-for-service model in 2012. This partnership initiative has placed nearly 200 eligibility workers throughout the state in various medical and community-based service organizations and plans to place an additional 7 eligibility workers by June 2012. Local offices continue to request funding for additional eligibility workers under this program, and DCF continues to submit requests to the Florida legislature for additional positions.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2009

- **Interview demonstration project.** DCF received an FNS waiver permitting nonstate employees of selected partners to conduct face-to-face SNAP interviews. DCF implemented a demonstration pilot project in which seven community partners conducted SNAP interviews in 22 counties. Interview partners received additional training and support from circuit-level staff, who also closely monitor them. State quality management staff are monitoring the demonstration.

  - *Status:* demonstration pilot

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* regional

  - *Timeline:* began in 2009 with one partner and expanded in 2011 to six additional partners

- **Outreach.** DCF has two partners in its statewide outreach plan. Second Harvest Food Bank partnered with nonprofit community organizations to fund eight staff members who work as a mobile outreach team in six counties. These staff complete online applications on laptop computers, conduct interviews, and scan all documents provided in the field. They provide coverage at dozens of community venues covering a six-county area. Catholic Charities began its mobile outreach team in 2010 with four staff members in three counties in Southwest Florida. The outreach teams are intended to target migrant populations. The partners receive SNAP Outreach grants through FNS, by way of DCF, which cover half of their outreach expenses.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* regional

  - *Timeline:* 2009

- **Reaching ex-offenders**. DCF partnered with the Department of Corrections and Baker Correctional Facility to help enroll ex-offenders into ACCESS programs upon their release. Baker Correctional Facility completes ACCESS applications up to one month

before an inmate's release. Applications are routed to a special unit in DCF that processes the applications when the inmate is released, using the release date as the date of application.

- *Status:* fully implemented
- *Other programs affected*: TANF and Medicaid
- *Scope:* regional
- *Timeline:* 2012

Policy Changes

- **Telephone interviews.** A waiver was requested and approval received from FNS to conduct initial application and recertification interviews over the telephone rather than in person. The waiver initially also allowed the state to omit recertification interviews, but this was later rescinded. In addition, Florida allows eligibility to be determined using information from the application with no interview in some cases.

  - *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented
  - *Other programs affected:* TANF and RAP
  - *Scope:* statewide
  - *Timeline:* waiver approved in 2005; waiver to eliminate recertification interviews was implemented in 2007 and rescinded in 2008

- **Shortened interviews.** DCF implemented a classification system with red and green classifications to identify more error-prone red cases (such as households in which a parent left home within the past year, those with money management problems, recent fraud findings, and cases subject to sanctions). Interviews were shortened for less error-prone green cases. Initially, all applicants received a green-track or shortened interview lasting approximately 10 minutes and red-track cases received a longer follow-up interview. Some locations have ceased using these classifications and instead conduct a single interview with more questions for error-prone cases.

  - *Status:* fully implemented
  - *Other programs affected:* TANF and RAP
  - *Scope:* statewide
  - *Timeline:* one district in 2003, statewide in 2005

- **Interviews at alternate recertifications.** DCF reduced the frequency of recertification interviews. Instead of interviewing at each recertification every six months, clients interview once a year, at alternating recertifications. This policy was implemented immediately after the wavier to omit recertification interviews was rescinded.

  - *Status:* fully implemented
  - *Other programs affected:* none
  - *Scope:* statewide
  - *Timeline:* 2008

- **Combined Application Project.** Florida has a Combined Application Project for SNAP and the SSI programs called SUNCAP. Clients enrolled through SUNCAP participate in SNAP without completing a separate application. Although SUNCAP was not introduced as part of DCF's modernization efforts, DCF considers information obtained through SUNCAP as verified upon receipt, thereby reducing the amount of verification clients must send and workers must process.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* SSI

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2005

- **Reduction in required documentation.** DCF reduced the amount of documentation clients must provide at initial application and recertification. Most expenses and assets, and some income, do not require documentation. No verification is required for assets unless they are within $100 of the asset limit, nor for shelter or utility expenses.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, RAP, and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* one district in 2003, statewide in 2005

- **Simplified reporting.** In 2003 (before modernization reform), the state adopted a simplified reporting option for income changes by which clients are not required to report changes that do not raise their incomes above 130 percent of the federal poverty level. In addition, DCF implemented a waiver from 2003 until 2008 allowing the state to act on all reported changes, instead of taking action only on beneficial changes and based on income information received from TANF and other programs, as regulations require.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* simplified reporting 2002, change waiver implemented 2003 until 2008

- **Expedited interviews postponed.** The state received a waiver from FNS allowing interviews for expedited cases to be postponed until after eligibility is determined.

  - *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2009

- **Interviews during appointment window.** Florida received a waiver from FNS allowing clients to contact the state for their initial or recertification interview during a specified time frame, rather than at a specific time. Eligibility workers attempt to cold call clients at least once before sending notices instructing clients to call their local interview line (or the call center in one region) for an interview by a certain date. The

interview window was 10 days in summer 2012, but has changed since first implementing this policy.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* none

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* 2011

- **Broad-based categorical eligibility.** DCF added broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) in 2010. Under the state's BBCE policy, households that receive information about TANF services on the department's website or on department notices qualify for the simpler BBCE SNAP rules.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline*: 2010

- **Simplified definition of income, resources, and assets.** DCF allows a simplified definition of income and resources that excludes many sources—including educational or interest and dividend income, student earnings, earned income and child tax credits, retroactive SSI, and retirement accounts—to a similar extent as TANF and/or Medicaid. In addition, Florida has adopted a policy to exclude vehicles as a resource or asset based on TANF child care policy.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2004, vehicles excluded 2008

- **EBT card distribution by mail.** All clients receive EBT cards by mail through a vendor. DCF has been mailing EBT cards to clients since the EBT card first came into use. Although mailing EBT cards predates Florida's modernization efforts, it is worth noting Florida has this policy since it can be considered a controversial modernization initiative in other states.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 1998

Table I.1.1. Summary of Modernization Activities, Florida

Type of Modernization Activity	Description of Activity	Waiver Required	Other Programs Affected			Geographic Scope
			TANF	Medicaid	Other	
Restructuring of Administrative Functions	Call centers	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Interactive Voice Response (IVR)	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Staff specialization and centralization	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Office closures	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Lobby redesign	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Creation of storefronts	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Telecommuting	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	QA/QC restructuring	No	x	x		Statewide
	Fraud prevention and benefit recovery restructuring	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Customer Information and Support Services unit	No	x	x	x	Statewide
Expanding Applications of Technology	Online application	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Online account	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Online screening tool	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Document imaging	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	ACCESS Management System	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Quality Management System	No	x	x		Statewide
	Data & Reports	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Community partner tracking system	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Community partner search tool	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Electronic notifications	Yes	x	x	x	Statewide
	Client notice redesign	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Data store	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Online account portal for partners	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Electronic partner portal	No	x	x	x	Regional (South Florida)

| Type of Modernization Activity | Description of Activity | Waiver Required | Other Programs Affected | | | Geographic Scope |
			TANF	Medicaid	Other	
Partnering with Community Organizations	Application assistance and access	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Fee-based eligibility worker placements	No	x	x		Statewide
	Interview demonstration project	Yes	x			Regional
	Outreach	No	x	x		Regional
	Reaching ex-offenders	No	x	x		Regional
Policy Changes	Telephone interviews	Yes	x		x	Statewide
	Shortened interviews	No	x		x	Statewide
	Interviews at alternating recertifications	No				Statewide
	Combined Application Project	No			x	Statewide
	Reduced required documentation	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Simplified reporting	No				Statewide
	Expedited interviews postponed	Yes				Statewide
	Interviews during appointment window	Yes				Statewide
	Broad-based categorical eligibility	No				Statewide
	Simplified definition of income /resources/assets	No	x			Statewide
	EBT cards distributed by mail	No				Statewide

Sources: Data were collected from interviews with state and local agency officials and community partners, state agency documents and websites, FNS's website and waivers database, and SNAP modernization studies conducted by the Urban Institute and Mathematica.

Timeline for Restructuring of Administrative Functions

- **2002:** Call center begins regional operation as change-reporting centers. CMUs begin regionally.

- **2004:** Call center expanded statewide. Lobbies of local offices redesigned, some offices begin to close. Regional program offices implemented.

- **2005:** IVR implemented at call center. Specialization of staff functions implemented statewide.

- **2006:** Storefronts created. Eligibility workers begin telecommuting.

- **2007:** QA and QC units restructured.

- **2009:** Circuit/region interview units established.

- **2011:** Fraud prevention and benefit recovery units restructured. CISS unit implemented.

Timeline for Expanding Applications of Technology

- **2004:** Online application launched via intranet only. Worker view for online application launched.

- **2005:** Online application launched on Internet with e-signature. IMS implemented. D&R system upgraded.

- **2006:** Document imaging system launched. Web-based change-reporting system launched. Community Partner Network Database launched.

- **2007:** Online screening tool launched. AMS client registration phase. CPTS replaced Community Partner Network Database.

- **2008:** My ACCESS online account launched. QMS upgraded. FLODS data store implemented. Community partner search tool launched.

- **2009:** AMS work management phase replaced IMS. Client notices redesigned in FLORIDA. My ACCESS online account partner view implemented. Electronic partner portal launched.

- **2010:** Online accounts enhanced allowing customers to submit reviews, changes, and additional benefits online.

- **2011:** Online accounts enhanced with capacity for uploading documentation.

- **2012:** AMS application entry module implemented. Electronic notices available via email alert.

Timeline for Partnering With Community Organizations

- **2005:** Community partner network implemented.

- **2009:** Fee-based eligibility worker placements available. Outreach partnerships established. Interview demonstration pilot project begins.

- **2011**: Interview demonstration pilot expanded.

- **2012**: Outreach targeted for ex-offenders.

Timeline for Policy Changes

- **1998:** EBT cards distributed by mail.

- **2003:** Simplified reporting option adopted and change reporting waiver approved. Shortened interviews and streamlined verification requirements piloted.

- **2004**: Simplified definition of income and assets adopted**.**

- **2005:** Waiver of face-to-face interviews approved. Shortened interviews and reduction in required documentation implemented statewide. Combined Application Project launched.

- **2008:** Vehicles excluded as assets. Interviews at alternating recertifications. Change reporting waiver eliminated.

- **2009:** Expedited interview postponement waiver approved.

- **2010:** BBCE implemented.

- **2011:** Interviews during appointment window.

Figure I.1.1. Timeline of Modernization Activities, Florida

Modernization Activity	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Call Centers												
Interactive Voice Response												
Staff Specialization and Centralization												
Office Closures												
Lobby Redesign												
Creation of Storefronts												
Telecommuting												
QA/QC Restructuring												
Fraud Prevention and Benefit Recovery Restructuring												
Customer Information and Support Services (CISS) Unit												
Online Application												
Online Account[a]												
Online Screening Tool												
Document Imaging												
ACCESS Management System (AMS)[b]												
Quality Management System (QMS)												
Data and Reports System (D&R)												

Modernization Activity	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Community Partner Tracking System (CPTS)[c]					██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██
Community Partner Search Tool							██	██	██	██	██	██
Electronic Notifications												░░
Client Notice Redesign								██	██	██	██	██
Data Store							██	██	██	██	██	██
Online Account Portal for Partners								██	██	██	██	██
Electronic Partner Portal								░░	░░	░░	░░	░░
Application Assistance and Access				██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██
Fee-based Eligibility Worker Placements								██	██	██	██	██
Interview Demonstration Project								░░	░░	░░	░░	░░
Outreach								░░	░░	░░	░░	░░
Reaching ex-offenders												██
Telephone Interviews				██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██
Shortened Interviews		░░	░░	██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██
Interviews at Alternating Recertifications							██	██	██	██	██	██
Combined Application Project				██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██
Reduced Required Documentation		░░	░░	██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██
Simplified Reporting		██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██	██

Modernization Activity	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Expedited Interviews Postponed									███	███	███	███
Interviews During Appointment Window											░░░	░░░
Broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE)										███	███	███
Simplified Definitions of Income, Resources, and Assets				███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███
EBT Cards Distributed by Mail	1998 ███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███

Sources: Data were collected from interviews with state and local agency officials and community partners, state agency documents and websites, FNS's website and waivers database, and SNAP modernization studies conducted by the Urban Institute and Mathematica.

[a] Change-reporting was added to the online account system in 2010. This enhancement replaced an earlier web-based change-reporting system that had been in place since 2006.

[b] The IMS, the precursor to the AMS, was implemented in 2005. AMS was implemented in 2007.

[c] The community partner network database, the precursor to the CPTS, launched in 2006. The CPTS was implemented in 2007.

░░░ Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.

███ Initiative in implementation statewide.

How Modernization Profile Was Developed

The Florida modernization profile was compiled using information collected from a variety of sources. Three previous SNAP modernization studies performed on the behalf of USDA's FNS—the first conducted by the Urban Institute and the other two by Mathematica—resulted in several reports that provided a firm foundation regarding modernization efforts in Florida. The study team putting together this profile also had access to and made use of the original data collected for the Mathematica-led research study.

The profile also relied on information drawn from extensive reviews of online resources—for example, FNS's website, the FNS waivers database, and Florida's ACCESS website. Most significantly, the profile was informed by documents collected directly from DFCS and local community partners, as well as interviews conducted in late 2011 and early 2012 with state and local agency officials and community partners.

Florida provided comments on an early version of the profile in September 2011 and again before publication. When appropriate, we incorporated comments and suggestions to provide clarity and ensure accuracy.

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1. Castner, Laura, Amy Wodarek O'Reilly, Kevin Conway, Maura Bardos, and Emily Sama-Miller. "Performance Measurement for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Modernization Initiatives: Final Report." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, 2012.

2. Cody, Scott D., Renée Nogales, and Emily Sama Martin. "Modernization of the Food Stamp Program in Florida." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, February 2008.

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5. Rowe, G., C. O'Brien, S. Hall, N. Pindus, L. Eyster, R. Koralek, and A. Stanczyk. "Enhancing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Certification: SNAP Modernization Efforts." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, March 2010.

6. Trippe, C., and J. Gillooly. "Non-Cash Categorical Eligibility for SNAP: State Policies and the Number and Characteristics of SNAP Households Categorically Eligible Through These Policies." Memo submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, July 23, 2010.

APPENDIX I.2

STATE PROFILE – GEORGIA

PROFILE OF SNAP MODERNIZATION INITIATIVES IN GEORGIA

Summary and Key Features

Georgia's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) modernization efforts aimed to improve efficiency, improve error rates, and increase access. Key initiatives include an online application, a call center for change reporting, specialization and centralization of eligibility workers, working with partners for outreach and other services, and policy changes such as expanded use of telephone interviews and automatic denials of cases that do not respond to verification requests in time. Since beginning to modernize, the state has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) for payment accuracy. This profile captures modernization initiatives in Georgia as of early 2012. At the end of this profile, Table I.2.1 and Figure I.2.1 provide a summary and timeline of modernization activities in Georgia.

Background on SNAP in Georgia

SNAP is administered in Georgia, by the Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Family and Children's Services (DFCS). Within DFCS, the Office of Family Independence (OFI) oversees administration of SNAP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, and Child Care. The 159 county DFCS offices are organized into 15 regions. The state's SNAP caseload was nearly 854,000 households (nearly 2 million individuals) as of December 2011, up from more than 431,000 households in 2000. In the same month, DFCS received more than 78,000 initial applications.[1]

Modernization Activities

Restructuring of Administrative Functions

- **Call center.** The state has a call center at which clients can report changes and ask questions regarding their OFI cases. Clients contact the call center via a statewide 800 number and fax verification documents to a centralized fax number. Call center staff are based in two different geographical locations (Atlanta and Albany) and handle all changes reported, including those reported via the online system, and register all online applications. They are also responsible for making changes based on data exchanges with other agencies. The state used American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) funds to support this effort when these funds were available.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* Medicaid, TANF, and Child Care

  - *Scope:* statewide

---

[1] Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Georgia DFCS.

- *Timeline:* opened in Atlanta metropolitan area in 1998; second location added for 67 southern counties in 2001; expanded statewide in 2007; locations combined under the same toll-free telephone number in 2008

- **Staff specialization and centralization.** DFCS restructured staff in local offices in 2008 and 2011 to relieve staff burden. In 2008, many local offices across the state specialized staff based on intake and ongoing functions, which handle initial applications and recertifications, respectively. In 2011, DFCS systematically shifted away from the traditional caseworker model in which a single eligibility worker was responsible for all activities, in an effort called Georgia Re-engineering Our Work, or GROW. GROW entails both staff specialization and centralization. There is considerable and intentional variation in staff roles within and across regions. Staff are typically separated based on intake and ongoing functions and can be further specialized based on interviewer and processor functions, expedited and nonexpedited applications, and online and paper applications. Centralization can be region-wide or across a few counties within a region. The state plans to require greater standardization of staff roles in the future and ultimately centralize staff on a statewide basis.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* Medicaid, TANF, and Child Care

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* Specialization based on intake and ongoing functions became common across the state in 2008. GROW planning began in 2010 and was implemented statewide in 2011.

- **Telecommuting.** At the time of this report, 60 percent of call agents were telecommuting, including all agents based in Atlanta and some based in Albany. Telecommuting has reduced the amount of office space required.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* Medicaid, TANF, and Child Care

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* Atlanta-based call agents began telecommuting in 2010

Expanding Applications of Technology

- **Online application.** DFCS's Common Point of Access to Social Services (COMPASS) system includes an online application that can be accessed from DFCS offices, community organizations, home, work, or any other location with an Internet connection. Applicants who create accounts can save an incomplete application and return to complete it later. Staff key in new information from the application into the state's eligibility system. Creation of the online application was funded in part through an FNS participation grant received in 2006. DFCS worked with a vendor to develop the COMPASS system.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* Child Care, the Summer Camp Program, TANF (pilot), and Medicaid (pilot)

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* grant received 2006; initially piloted in four counties (one large metropolitan county, two urban counties, and one rural county); implemented statewide December 2008

- **Online account.** Applicants can create a COMPASS account to check the status of their SNAP applications online and, if approved, SNAP recipients can create an account called MyCOMPASS to check their benefit status and history, report changes to their household circumstances, and recertify online. The ability to check benefit history and recertify online were introduced later, after the state linked the online and eligibility systems. Once the document imaging system is implemented, clients will be prompted to upload verification directly to their accounts after completing an application, recertification, or change-report. DFCS worked with a vendor to develop the COMPASS system.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, Medicaid, and Child Care

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* grant received 2006; initially piloted in four counties; implemented statewide December 2008, recertification function and benefits history added 2011

- **Online screening tool.** The COMPASS system includes a screening tool that calculates potential eligibility for SNAP and other social service programs. DFCS worked with a vendor to develop the COMPASS system.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* Medicaid, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); Child Care; Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services; TANF; Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP); Child Support Services; Energy Assistance (LIHEAP); and Aging Services

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* grant received 2006, initially piloted in four counties; implemented statewide December 2008

- **Online account dashboard for partners.** DFCS developed a community partner dashboard for the MyCOMPASS online account system. Registered COMPASS partners (described separately) can log in to submit applications, recertifications, or change reports on behalf of clients, and view client benefit information. Partners can also view applications they submitted. Notably, the partner dashboard produces reports showing partners' activities, including the number of screenings performed, applications submitted, change reports submitted, clients assisted, and clients who were ultimately

granted SNAP benefits. Reports also display the total amount of benefits they have helped clients obtain, among other metrics.

- *Status:* pilot

- *Other programs affected:* TANF, Medicaid, and Child Care

- *Scope:* piloted by Registered COMPASS Community Partners based in Atlanta metropolitan area and northeast Georgia

- *Timeline:* pilot began in 2011, expansion planned for 2012

- **Community partner search tool.** Clients search for Registered COMPASS Community Partners in their counties through the COMPASS online system. Clients can view information about each partner, including services provided, contact information, and hours of operation. New partners are listed as a resource upon registering as a COMPASS partner. The search tool is accessible statewide.

    - *Status*: fully implemented

    - *Other programs affected*: TANF, Medicaid, and Child Care

    - *Scope:* statewide

    - *Timeline:* 2011

- **Document imaging.** DFCS piloted a document imaging system at the time of this report. When it is implemented statewide, clients will be able to submit scanned or photographed verification electronically to the document imaging system from any computer or tablet device by uploading documents to their online accounts. Prompts at the end of the online application, recertification, and change-report will prompt clients to attach verification, or they can upload documents at a later time. Lobby electronic/online application stations and scanners will also be added to local offices and select community organizations for this purpose. DFCS staff will scan paper applications and other documentation they receive from clients. DFCS worked with a vendor to develop the document imaging system.

    - *Status:* pilot

    - *Other programs affected:* TANF, Medicaid, and Child Care

    - *Scope:* one region

    - *Timeline:* pilot in one region began in 2011, statewide roll-out planned for 2012

Partnering with Community Organizations

- **Application assistance and access.** DFCS piloted a statewide network of formal partners known as Registered COMPASS Community Partners. Registered COMPASS partners are registered with the state and listed on the online COMPASS system along with a description of the services they provide and contact information. There are three types of registered partners: (1) self-service sites offer informational materials and access to computers and printers, fax and photocopy machines, and telephones; (2) assisted-service sites offer the same equipment plus application and case assistance; and (3)

umbrella organizations register assisted and self-service sites, with final approval from the state coordinator, and train, monitor, and provide assistance to their sites. Umbrella organizations may or may not additionally provide the services of assisted sites. Registered partners sign memorandum of understanding with the state; they do not receive compensation. As of spring 2012, the partnership network included two umbrella organizations overseeing a total of 16 assisted-service sites. Expansion of the partnership network was planned for 2012, following the appointment of a full-time state coordinator in the spring.

- *Status:* pilot

- *Other programs affected:* TANF, Medicaid, and Child Care

- *Scope:* pilot partners based in Atlanta metropolitan area and northeast Georgia

- *Timeline:* pilot began in 2011, expansion planned for 2012

- **Outreach.** As part of the state's outreach plan, DFCS contracts with community organizations through federal SNAP Outreach grants to provide outreach activities, including food and nutrition information dissemination, application filing assistance, document/verification procurement and submission, and translation assistance. Each agency targets a different demographic, population, or area of the state that is underserved, such as the elderly, domestic violence victims, low-income working families, Hispanic and Pan-Asian populations, or clients served by a food bank. The partnering agencies provide matching funds to cover half of the outreach costs, and the state reimburses the other half of their costs through federal matching funds. Partners are overseen by a state administrator who conducts training, monitors activities, and provides technical assistance to the agencies as needed. Partners provide quarterly invoices and reports outlining their outreach activities and progress toward meeting goals outlined in their outreach plans.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* regional

  - *Timeline:* 2006, expanded from three to nine partners in 2011, contracted to eight partners in 2012

- **Community-based SNAP work group.** The state created a SNAP work group in conjunction with several community partners and FNS. The work group was initially developed based on similar work groups in other states. A steering committee composed of representatives from the state, FNS, a food bank, Legal Aid, and an outreach agency developed the work group's mission and develops meeting agendas. The goals of the work group are to educate community organizations about SNAP access and policy, develop better working relationships between the state and formal and informal community partners, and develop dialogue on how to improve the program in Georgia and improve access to the program via joint efforts from all members of the work group. DFCS staff can increase their awareness of issues from the client's perspective, and outside organizations can learn about the state's perspective. Several subcommittees were established to address specific concerns, including access to elderly residents and

those with limited English proficiency, communication through notices, and advocacy. Thirty to 40 organizations participate in the work group.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* none

- *Scope:* regional

- *Timeline:* 2010

Policy Changes

- **Telephone interviews.** A waiver was requested and approval received from FNS to conduct both initial application interviews and recertification interviews over the telephone, rather than in person, without documenting hardship. Telephone interviews were implemented to simplify the interview process, increase worker efficiency, and increase access and reduce the number of case closures due to clients failing to keep an office interview. A work group composed of field staff developed statewide training on effective telephone interviewing. Implementation also required changes to the appointment letters so that clients were aware of the option for a telephone interview. Even before the waiver, the state's policy had been rewritten to broaden the definition of hardship, so that most clients would not be required to complete an office interview. An earlier, now obsolete, waiver approved in 2000 had allowed telephone interviews at recertification for households with elderly and/or disabled members and no earned income.

  - *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2009

- **Shortened interviews.** DFCS added questions to the online version of the application and shortened the initial certification interviews for clients who applied online. The state also shortened all recertification interviews. In addition, the state developed an Expedited Screening Guide to streamline all initial interviews. The guide was designed to quickly identify, screen, and interview applicants for expedited services. The goal was to improve the standard of promptness (SOP) rate for applications and reduce workload for field staff.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* expedited screening guide was piloted in several counties prior to statewide expansion in 2009

- **Interviews at alternate recertifications.** DFCS reduced the frequency of recertification interviews. Instead of interviewing at each recertification every six months, clients interview once a year, at alternating recertifications.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2010

- **Reduced verification requirements** for certain deductions**.** The state adopted reduced verification requirements for shelter and dependent care deductions. The client's statement of shelter cost is accepted and dependent care costs are verified only if the amount is more than $200 per month. These policy changes were implemented to reduce burden on workers.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 20010

- **Simplified reporting.** A waiver was requested and approval received from FNS to require all households to report a change only when their gross monthly income exceeds 130 percent of the federal poverty level for their household size. Simplified reporting requirements apply to all SNAP households in Georgia. The state changed the policy to improve accuracy, reduce workload, enable the state's fraud unit to concentrate on larger claims, reduce the number of case closures between recertifications, and reduce the number of reapplications. Implementation was challenging initially due to the reluctance of staff to understand that changes did not have to be acted upon and to understand the differences between SNAP, Medicaid, and TANF policies. Refresher training was held to make sure that the policy was correctly implemented.

  - *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* initially implemented for earned income households in 2002, revised to include all households 2009

- **Broad-based categorical eligibility.** The state adopted broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE), extending categorical eligibility to households that receive TANF Community Outreach Services (TCOS). TCOS provides information and referral services to households whose gross income falls at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level. For elderly or disabled households, services are provided when the income falls at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. TCOS brochures are provided to households at initial application and review. Resources are excluded from eligibility calculations for all households that receive these services. This policy change was initially

undertaken as an accuracy improvement strategy and was implemented to increase access and eliminate the resource/asset test from consideration in the SNAP eligibility determination.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* none

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* 2008

- **Automatic denials.** A waiver was requested and approval received from FNS allowing the state to deny applications the day following the verification due date if the applicant has not responded to a request for verification.

  - *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2006

- **Expedited interview postponement.** A waiver was requested and approval received from FNS allowing the state to postpone the interview for applicants meeting expedited processing criteria when identity has been verified.

  - *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* waiver initially granted November 2010 for 18 months

- **Self-employment deduction waiver.** A waiver was requested and approval received from FNS to provide a standard deduction of 40 percent of self-employment income for the cost of doing business for self-employed individuals. The waiver establishes a simplified method of verifying and determining business cost when calculating self-employment income and was requested due to the complexity in calculating self-employment deductions.

  - *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2002

- **Waiver to average student work hours.** A waiver was requested and approval received from FNS allowing the state to average student work hours to account for work schedules that fluctuate due to classes and/or employer needs. Students whose work hours fluctuate from week to week are considered eligible as long as they maintain average employment of 20 hours per week or 80 hours per month. The waiver simplifies

the eligibility process for students and is intended to improve program participation among those striving to obtain self-sufficiency through higher education.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* none

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* request submitted March 2010, implemented June 2010

- **Census Bureau income waiver.** A waiver was requested and approval received from FNS to exclude the earnings of temporary U.S. Census employees during the period from February 1, 2010, through September 30, 2010, for the 2010 Census Bureau Demonstration Project. This waiver supports the Census Bureau's operations and aligns SNAP policy with the TANF and Medicaid programs' policies, which exclude Census income when determining eligibility for assistance.

  - *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF and Medicaid

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2010

- **Transitional benefits.** Georgia provides transitional SNAP benefits to households that become ineligible for TANF benefits because of an increase or change in earned income. Households can receive transitional benefits for a period of five months and the benefit amount is frozen at the amount received before the TANF case closure. This policy was implemented to provide support services to households leaving TANF and becoming self-sufficient.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2006

- **Translation of the paper application.** The state contracted with a vendor to translate the SNAP paper-based application into 10 different languages, in addition to English: Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, French, Hmong, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. These applications are available through the DFCS website. In addition, all appointment notices include an insert in the 10 languages with instructions for clients needing assistance to read the notice.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2008

- **EBT card distribution by mail.** Clients receive EBT cards by mail through a vendor. DFCS has been mailing EBT cards to clients since the EBT card first came into use. Although mailing EBT cards predates Georgia's modernization efforts, it is worth noting Georgia has this policy because it can be considered a controversial modernization initiative in other states.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 1998

Table I.2.1. Summary of Modernization Activities, Georgia

Type of Modernization Activity	Description of Activity	Waiver Required	Other Programs Affected			Geographic Scope
			TANF	Medicaid	Other	
Restructuring of Administrative Functions	Call center	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Staff specialization and centralization	No		x	x	Statewide
	Telecommuting (call agents only)	No	x	x	x	Statewide
Expanding Applications of Technology	Online application	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Online account	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Online screening tool	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Online account dashboard for partners	No	x	x	x	Pilot in two areas
	Partner search tool	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Documentation imaging	No	x	x	x	Pilot in one area
Partnering with Community Organizations	Application assistance and access	No	x	x	x	Pilot in two areas
	Outreach	No				Regional
	Community-based SNAP work group	No				Regional
Policy Changes	Telephone interviews	Yes				Statewide
	Shortened interviews	No				Statewide
	Interviews at alternating recertifications	No				Statewide
	Reduced verification requirements	No				Statewide
	Simplified reporting	Yes				Statewide
	Broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE)	No				Statewide
	Automatic denials	Yes				statewide
	Expedited interview postponement	Yes				Statewide
	Standard self-employment deduction	Yes				Statewide
	Waiver to average student work hours	Yes				Statewide
	Census Bureau income waiver	Yes	x	x		Statewide
	Transitional benefits	No	x			Statewide
	Foreign language paper applications	No				Statewide
	EBT cards by mail	No				Statewide

Sources: Data were collected from interviews with state and local agency officials and community partners, state agency documents and websites, FNS's website and waivers database, and SNAP modernization studies conducted by the Urban Institute and Mathematica.

Timeline for Restructuring of Administrative Functions

- **1998:** Call center established in Atlanta metropolitan area.

- **2001:** Second call center location opened for 67 southern counties.

- **2007:** Call center expanded statewide.

- **2008:** Specialization of staff based on intake and ongoing functions common statewide. Call center locations combined under the same toll-free telephone number.

- **2010:** Atlanta-based call agents began telecommuting in 2010.

- **2011:** Specialization and centralization of staff expanded to other eligibility processes based on local needs under GROW.

Timeline for Expanding Applications of Technology

- **2006:** Received grant to develop online application.

- **2008:** Online application, screening tool, and online accounts launched statewide. Online accounts have capacity for online change-reporting.

- **2011:** Online accounts enhanced to include recertification submission and benefit history. Document imaging system pilot begins. Online community partner search tool launched and pilot of online account dashboard for partners begins.

Timeline for Partnering with Community Organizations

- **2006:** Partners involved in SNAP outreach.

- **2011:** Registered COMPASS partnership network is piloted.

- **2010:** Community-based SNAP work group established.

Timeline for Policy Changes

- **1998:** EBT cards distributed by mail.

- **2002:** Simplified reporting waiver for earned income households approved. Standard self-employment deduction established.

- **2006:** Transitional benefits initiated. Automatic denial policy implemented.

- **2008:** Categorical eligibility expanded. Paper applications translated into 10 foreign languages.

- **2009:** Waiver of face-to-face interviews approved. Simplified reporting waiver expanded to include all households. Interviews shortened for online applicants and all clients at recertification.

- **2010:** Verification requirements reduced. Interviews required at alternate recertifications and postponed for expedited applicants. Waivers to average student work hours and exclude temporary U.S. Census Bureau income implemented.

Figure I.2.1. Timeline of Modernization Activities, Georgia

Modernization Activity	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Call Centers															
Staff Specialization and Centralization															
Telecommuting (call agents only)															
Online Application															
Online Account															
Online Screening Tool															
Online Account Dashboard for Partners															
Partner Search Tool															
Document Imaging															
Partner Application Assistance and Access															
Outreach															
Community-Based SNAP Work Group															
Telephone Interviews															
Shortened Interviews															
Interviews at Alternating Recertifications															
Reduced Verification Requirements															

Modernization Activity	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012

Simplified Reporting

Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE)

Expedited Interview Postponement

Automatic Denials

Standard Self-Employment Deduction

Average Student Work Hours

U.S. Census Income Waiver

Transitional Benefits

Foreign Language Paper Applications

EBT Cards by Mail

Sources: Data were collected from interviews with state and local agency officials and community partners, state agency documents and websites, FNS's website and waivers database, and SNAP modernization studies conducted by the Urban Institute and Mathematica.

Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.

Initiative in implementation statewide.

How Modernization Profile Was Developed

The Georgia modernization profile was compiled using information collected from a variety of sources. Two previous SNAP modernization studies performed on the behalf of USDA's FNS—the first conducted by the Urban Institute and the other by Mathematica—resulted in several reports that provided a firm foundation regarding modernization efforts in Georgia. The study team putting together this profile also had access to and made use of the original data collected for the Mathematica-led research study.

The profile also relied on information drawn from extensive reviews of online resources—for example, FNS's website, the FNS waivers database, and Georgia's SNAP and COMPASS websites. Most significantly, the profile was informed by documents collected directly from DFCS and local community partners, as well as interviews conducted in late 2011 and early 2012 with state and local agency officials and community partners.

Georgia provided comments on an early version of the profile in September 2011 and again before publication. When appropriate, we incorporated comments and suggestions to provide clarity and ensure accuracy.

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1. O'Brien, C., P. Holcomb, R. Koralek, J. Parnes, N. Pindus, and G. Rowe. "Enhancing Food Stamp Certification: Food Stamp Modernization Efforts." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, August 2007.

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5. Trippe, C., and J. Gillooly. "Non-Cash Categorical Eligibility for SNAP: State Policies and the Number and Characteristics of SNAP Households Categorically Eligible Through These Policies." Memo submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, July 23, 2010.

APPENDIX I.3

STATE PROFILE – MASSACHUSETTS

PROFILE OF SNAP MODERNIZATION INITIATIVES IN MASSACHUSETTS

Summary and Key Features

Massachusetts has implemented a variety of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) modernization activities since 2002, driven by the primary goal of increasing program access with additional goals of easing administrative burden on staff and improving customer service. Key activities included a localized initiative and pilot to split the intake and ongoing case maintenance functions of local office staff; the Virtual Gateway (VG) eligibility screener, online application (VG Provider View and VG Consumer View) and account system (My Account Page); automated SNAP hotline; call center; reimbursement of community partners to assist with the application process; and policy changes such as telephone interviews at initial certification and recertification and a waiver of recertification interviews for elderly and disabled households with no earned income. Since beginning modernization, the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) has had increased participation and received U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) awards for error rates and application processing timeliness. This profile captures modernization initiatives in Massachusetts as of early 2012. At the end of this profile, Table I.3.1 and Figure I.3.1 provide a summary and timeline of modernization activities in Massachusetts.

Background on SNAP in Massachusetts

SNAP is administered at the state level in Massachusetts. DTA has 22 local Transitional Assistance Offices (TAOs) in four regions across the state. Since September 2007, DTA has closed two local offices, one in the North region and the other in the West region. In addition, four satellite offices and 10 SNAP access sites are collocated with community organizations. The state's SNAP caseload was more than 440,000 households (more than 785,000 individuals) as of December 2011, an increase of 259 percent from 2003. In the same month, DTA received over 22,000 initial applications.[1]

Modernization Activities

Restructuring of Administrative Functions

- **Intake/ongoing staff specialization.** Some local offices have restructured their staff to specialize intake and ongoing functions. Two local offices have implemented the new specialized structure as part of a localized initiative, although they implemented it differently. The Holyoke office in the western part of the state implemented a three-unit structure, separating intake and two ongoing case maintenance teams, one for annual reporting and another for recertifications. On the other hand, in the Fitchburg office, the staff utilize a two-unit structure, separating staff into intake and ongoing teams. This

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[1] Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Massachusetts DTA.

structure has been implemented in those two offices since 2009. Eleven other local offices (for a total of 13) implemented the two-unit intake/ongoing staff structure as a pilot in January 2012. The intake staff handle applications from submission to an eligibility determination; they have a rotating caseload and hold on to cases for the 30-day period allowed for an eligibility determination. They perform the interview and collect and verify any necessary documentation for the case. If a determination is made and the case is approved, the intake worker hands the case off to an ongoing worker, who keeps the case for the duration it is active and performs recertification and case maintenance tasks. Although the pilot was originally supposed to be implemented in 2010, it faced some delays in union negotiations and was delayed until the beginning of 2012.

- *Status:* piloted

- *Other programs affected:* none

- *Scope:* initially two local offices (Fitchburg and Holyoke) as part of a localized initiative, now piloted in 13 local offices

- *Timeline:* localized initiative separating intake and case maintenance in 2 local offices (Fitchburg and Holyoke) in 2009; expanded to 11 other local offices as a pilot in January 2012

- **Centralized application processing.** DTA formed two specialized units, called web application units (WAUs), to process online applications. These units pull down online applications, move them to the Benefit Eligibility and Control Online Network (BEACON) III eligibility system, assign them, process them through eligibility determination, and transfer the approved cases to a local office. The Springfield/State unit performs these functions for two other local offices in the western part of the state, Holyoke and Greenfield; the Central Office Boston area unit conducts them for the eastern part of the state, serving Dudley Square, New Market Square, Brockton, Malden, and North Shore. Performance monitoring for these two WAUs differs. The Central Office unit staff are isolated and their performance is tracked separately. The Springfield/State unit staff are integrated with the rest of the local office staff and, although the source of the online applications processed by this unit can be tracked, the performance of the unit is not separated from that of the rest of the local office. The Central Office staff have cited being understaffed as a major problem. The volume at the Springfield/State unit is more manageable for its staff, and they have even been able to help other offices by temporarily processing their web applications, such as Worcester, which had difficulty recovering from a late fall 2011 snow storm and keeping up with its web application volume. Local offices not serviced by one of the WAUs have a SNAP web liaison who pulls the online application into the BEACON III system and assigns it to a local SNAP worker.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* none

- *Scope:* Boston Central Office unit (Revere, Dudley Square, New Market Square, Brockton, Malden, North Shore) and Springfield/State unit (Springfield, Holyoke, Greenfield)

- *Timeline:* 2009

- **Brockton call center.** In 2007, DTA began piloting a call center in the Brockton area TAO. The creation of the call center was mandated by legislation. DTA partnered with Public Consulting Group, Inc. (PCG)[2] in the design and creation of the Brockton call center. DTA worked closely with PCG in developing the technological, staffing, training, outreach, facility and other implementation requirements. Callers in the Brockton area could reach the pilot call center by dialing a toll-free number; that was originally staffed during regular business hours by five workers and a manager (Keefe et al. 2012). Staff were temporarily moved to Boston in August 2010 and returned to Brockton in late October 2010 due to technical problems with a key data transmission line. After returning to Brockton, staff at the call center included three full-time workers plus one supervisor (Keefe et al. 2012). Shortly after their return, the call center staff integrated with 11 or 12 staff members in the local office to catch up with backlog. Since that time, the call center has evolved into an application center. Brockton call center staff did not have caseloads but did fill four specific roles: (1) responding to general inquiries regarding the application process, as well as calls about specific pending applications and ongoing cases (such as the status of an application or benefit amount); (2) receiving and initiating processing[3] of all mail-in, fax, drop-off, and web SNAP applications for the service area; (3) conducting expedited screening and interviews and issuing expedited SNAP benefits to those households who met expedited criteria; and (4) conducting telephone interviews for applicants eligible for a waiver of the face-to-face interview requirement. The call center had a computerized telephone system that had functionality to transfer calls to an agent; it also had the ability to receive and process faxes, applications, and recertifications. Staff at the call center could schedule appointments and return client calls.

  - *Status:* piloted

  - *Other programs affected:* Cash assistance clients before August 2010

  - *Scope:* Brockton local office4

  - *Timeline:* 2007–2010

- **Central call center.** After the pilot Brockton call center closed in 2010, a more limited call center opened in Boston's Central Office. Call center staff accept calls from the entire state. The main functions of this call center are to (1) respond to basic inquiries about the program, (2) refer clients to their assigned case manager, (3) notify the case

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[2] PCG is a government consulting firm that offers services related to public policy development, financial management, operations improvement, and strategic planning. PCG is experienced in developing call centers and is familiar with the food stamp application process, as DTA previously contracted with PCG on a project to improve the efficiency of the application process.

[3] Initial processing includes (1) entering application data into the initial BEACON screens; (2) contacting the applicant by telephone to screen for hardship waiver and expedited service, explain the next steps in the application process, and obtain information about the best day and time to reach the applicant for the interview; and (3) forwarding the application package to the assigned case worker, who completes the application process and makes an eligibility determination

[4] As of October 2010, the Brockton area office was no longer an active call center.

manager about any communication with a client, and (4) provide copies of any notices upon request. The call center does not initiate applications, although staff can send callers a hard-copy application or direct them to the online application.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* none

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* 2010

- **Outstationed SNAP workers.** DTA collocates satellite offices and SNAP outreach centers within health centers, senior centers, and community nonprofits. The sites have access to the BEACON III system and are equipped with portable printers, faxes, and scanning equipment for immediate service. On-site DTA workers provide case information and application assistance, collect required verifications, complete application interviews, and can provide ongoing case maintenance and recertification. The satellite offices are in Athol, Northampton, Somerville, and Waltham, areas not readily accessible to existing TAOs. A total of 12 SNAP outreach centers are in Boston, Chelsea, Fall River, Falmouth, Lynn, Martha's Vineyard, and Orleans.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* 4 satellite offices, 12 outreach centers

  - *Timeline:* 2008

Expanding Applications of Technology

- **Updated eligibility system platform.** The previous eligibility system (BEACON II) had been in operation since August 14, 2001. The original developer of BEACON II was Albion (Keefe et al. 2012). BEACON II was developed and written in Forte language, which is no longer supported by any vendor. A web-based version, written in Java, called BEACON III started development in 2007 and was implemented on August 30, 2010. BEACON III has tools that enable workers to schedule interviews and appointments and sort cases (by active cases, pending cases, and by name). BEACON III also has queries (or views) exportable into Excel, including those that show the stage an application is in, how many days the application has been in the office, and whether the application is expedited. These views enable the case managers to identify priority actions.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC); Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC); Employment Services Program (ESP); Child Care,

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* development began 2007; implemented in August 2010

- **Online application.** SNAP applications can be completed and submitted online using the VG. The VG contains information on SNAP and free and reduced-price school meals, an eligibility screener, an intake application, and a page for clients to view their account information (My Account Page, or MAP). Executive Office of Health and Human Services partnered with Deloitte to develop the VG online application. The online application was initially available only through trained community partners or through the VG Provider View since 2004. The VG Consumer View version of the online application was piloted in 2006 and went live statewide in 2007. The VG Consumer View is accessible by individuals without provider assistance from a home, office, library, or any other location with Internet access. Electronic signature functionality enables applicants to sign their applications online. Applicants can create a VG account and save an incomplete application to complete at a later time. Data entered into the online application are migrated directly into the eligibility system, BEACON III, and hard-copy applications have to be data entered into BEACON III by case workers.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* free and reduced-price school meals

  - *Scope:* VG Provider View is statewide; VG Consumer View was initially piloted in five cities and towns consisting of nine zip codes in the Fall River area and then expanded statewide

  - *Timeline:* VG Provider View web site was launched in August 2004; VG Consumer View piloted in February 2006 and expanded statewide in November 2007; electronic signature implemented in 2007[5]

- **Online screening tool.** An online benefit screening tool is also available on the VG to determine potential eligibility for SNAP. The short, anonymous screening survey asks questions about people in the household and compares the answers with program rules. The tool tells users if it appears that the household or individuals might qualify for a variety of assistance programs, gives the next steps to apply for each program, and provides reason(s) if it appears that the household will not qualify.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC); health insurance and health assistance programs; child care subsidies; and long-term support services

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* March 2007 for VG Consumer View (September 2005 for authorized community partners using VG Provider View)

- **Online account information.** Clients can view their application status and benefit information through the VG's MAP web portal. MAP provides users with information

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[5] In December 2009, the Department introduced the fill-in portable document format (PDF) application available on DTA's website.

on case status, benefits, issuance dates, notices issued in the past 90 days, and next recertification date, but users cannot make changes to their personal information online. To use MAP, the head of the household (the individual who signed the application for benefits) must register for a VG account.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* MAP provides information about clients' state cash assistance, TANF, and health assistance benefits

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* July 2010

- **Partner access to client application information.** Partners who have access to the VG Provider View can view limited case-specific information regarding the application status of applications they helped to submit. Partners can generate reports from the VG Provider View on the applications they have helped submit including, the total number of applications and their status.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* VG Provider View web site launched in 2004

- **Document submission by email.** Some local offices accept scanned documents through email from local community partners. Local offices have designated staff, known as web liaisons, to handle pulling down online applications and accept emailed documents. The web liaisons print and file the documents because DTA's planned document imaging system is not yet implemented.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* select local offices

  - *Timeline:* 2010

- **DTA Automated hotline.** DTA has an automated hotline separate from its call center. It is available through a toll-free number (877-382-2363). It enables clients and recent applicants to access basic information about SNAP, their applications, or their cases.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* state cash assistance programs, TANF

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2011

- **Document imaging.** Although the fiscal year (FY) 2007 General Appropriations Act mandated and funded the development of a system to image and catalog eligibility

documents electronically, document imaging does not have an anticipated timeline for implementation as of September 2012. DTA tested a document imaging model in the North Shore local office, but has not implemented document imaging on a broader scale. The vendor, PCG, had been involved in the development of the document imaging initiative. The project had planned to integrate the scanning capability into the BEACON, DTA's eligibility determination system. This functionality would support both local scanning of documents—in which workers scan documents directly into a client's case folder using a scanner attached to their desktop—and centralized capabilities, in which an office with one or two centralized scanners links scanned documents with the client's electronic case folder. DTA also sought to integrate the scanning technology with a third-party file management software product. There has been discussion that when this initiative is able to get off the ground it might possibly consolidate with MassHealth's document imaging system.

- *Status:* pilot

- *Other programs affected:* TANF and other state cash assistance programs

- *Scope:* tested in North Shore office, planned to eventually be implemented statewide

- *Timeline:* Planning and testing in four locations began in July 2006; development was planned to begin in 2008, statewide testing was planned to begin in 2009, and implementation originally expected 2011, but the current implementation schedule is unknown

- **BEACON data warehouse.** Production data from the BEACON III database are migrated into the SNAP data warehouse. It includes monthly snapshots as of last day of the month and weekly snapshots as of the end of the week. The data warehouse is the primary source of report data for the Department's reporting systems, and is available for the data warehouse user group members to perform ad hoc queries. School Lunch Program (NSLP) on a biannual basis.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TAFDC, EAEDC, EA, ESP, and Child Care

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2006

Partnering with Community Organizations

- **SNAP Outreach Partner Reimbursement Program.** DTA implemented a pilot to have formal contracts to reimburse community partners for application assistance. When the pilot began in 2011, there were 6 community partners; the project expanded to 14 partners in 2012. For federal FY 2013, the program is expected to expand to 22 partners. The pilot is administered by the University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS). It provides administrative support for the pilot and enter into contracts with the partners directly. UMMS also tracks the partners' performance; according to their agreements, partners must maintain at least a 50 percent approval rate for applications submitted. Outreach partners are reimbursed for 45 percent of allowable costs for the SNAP

outreach and application activities. UMMS is also reimbursed 47.5 percent of its administrative costs associated with running this project, plus 2.5 percent of the participating partners' allowable costs.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* none

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* 2010

- **Community organization staff conduct screening and assist with applications.** DTA trains staff of community organizations, including churches, senior centers, hospitals, health clinics, schools, group homes, and food banks/pantries, about SNAP application processing and outreach. These community partners can screen clients, assist them in completing SNAP applications via VG Provider View, help gather necessary documentation, and submit these documents on their behalf. Authorized partners can look up a client's case status online via reports on the VG Provider View.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* DTA has made efforts to encourage MassHealth providers that use VG for MassHealth applications to assist their clients in applying for SNAP as well

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2002

- **Commnity organization created first online application.** The state's first online SNAP application, which has since been replaced by the VG and is obsolete, was created by Project Bread, a statewide hunger-relief community organization that provides technical assistance and funding to smaller organizations across the state.

  - *Status:* obsolete

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2004

- **FoodSource hotline.** DTA has a contractual agreement with Project Bread, the Walk for Hunger, Inc. to provide statewide outreach services through its public information FoodSource hotline system. The hotline is accessible through a toll-free number, 1-800-645-8333. It provides SNAP information, prescreening, and referral and application assistance, including assistance with the online application. The goal of the hotline is to increase participation by eligible households in SNAP. Project Bread hires direct staff to operate the FoodSource hotline. The hotline targets groups that traditionally have low rates of SNAP participation, such as rural populations, individuals eligible for nonpublic assistance SNAP benefits, the unemployed, part-time workers, the elderly, the disabled, and non–English-speaking populations. Under the contractual agreement, DTA provides

Project Bread $250,000 per year in funding. DTA oversees the arrangement by monitoring the contract and reviewing monthly reports and invoice documentation.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* none

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* 2005

- **Reaching the Latino Working Poor in Massachusetts.** DTA and Project Bread received an FNS grant to increase SNAP participation among the Latino working poor in Massachusetts. The project is a two-year pilot in two cities (Chelsea and Worcester) to identify and assist low-income working Latinos—those working at or near minimum wage, those underemployed, and those recently unemployed—in applying for SNAP benefits. This project is aimed at recruiting Latino-serving community partners, including at least one employer in each city, to do an intensive, targeted outreach campaign to health centers, schools, and businesses employing large numbers of Latinos. The project staff are trained to conduct outreach, prescreening, enrollment, and follow-up, and to expand the capacity of the Latino community to utilize SNAP. DTA oversees this arrangement by monitoring the contractual agreement and by reviewing contract deliverables, including quarterly and final reports.

  - *Status:* pilot completed

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* two cities (Chelsea and Worcester)

  - *Timeline:* 2009–2011

Policy Changes

- **Extended certification periods.** DTA staff assign households the maximum certification periods allowed by federal law. Elderly and disabled households are eligible for a two-year certification period; other households are assigned one-year certification periods. At the end of the certification period, households receive a recertification form prefilled with data from the DTA database. Households must confirm that the information is the same or report and verify that a change has taken place.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2008

- **Shortened application.** DTA shortened the SNAP application from 16 to 4 pages in 2002 and later developed a further streamlined, 2-page version for elderly applicants in 2008.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* none

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* four-page application in 2002, two-page elderly application in 2008

- **Simplified reporting.** DTA implemented simplified reporting with the rollout of Universal Semiannual Reporting (USR) for certain SNAP households. USR is required for homeless households and for nonpublic assistance households that have earned or unearned income (or a history of income) with a few exceptions, such as households with self-employment income or those in which all adults are elderly or disabled with no earned income. Under USR, only changes in income that cause the household's gross monthly income to exceed the maximum gross monthly income standard must be reported during the certification period.

  - *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2002

- **Combined Application Project.** The Bay State Combined Application Project (CAP) has enabled some Social Security Income (SSI) recipients to receive SNAP benefits automatically. The Bay State CAP is a collaboration between DTA and the Social Security Administration (SSA), in which a specialized unit housed within the Malden TAO manages all case activities and recertifications for SSI recipients who are unmarried, prepare food alone, have no earned income, and are U.S. citizens. Through Beneficiary and Earnings Data Exchange (BENDEX), DTA receives information from SSA on those who are eligible for the Bay State CAP. These individuals are then automatically enrolled and sent an EBT card. Individuals need only activate the EBT card to begin receiving benefits. On average, Bay State CAP recipients receive $23 to $40 more in benefits than they would if they received traditional SNAP benefits, depending on their shelter costs (O'Brien 2010). Initially in 2005, the state sent outreach letters to all eligible SSI recipients. As of September 2012, individuals are enrolled in the CAP at application for SSI or during their SSI reevaluation. CAP cases have a recertification period of three years. However, DTA is switching from collaborating with SSA to collaborating with the University of Massachusetts to administer its State Supplement Payments program, as it has become more costly to administer through SSA.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* SSI

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2005; transition to UMass administration expected in 2012

- **Waive recertification interview for certain elderly/disabled households with no earned income.** DTA received a waiver of the interview requirement at recertification for households meeting the following criteria: (1) all members are elderly or disabled, (2) no earned income, (3) complete recertification form submitted on time, (4) verifications

complete and not questionable, and (5) household eligible to continue receiving SNAP benefits. If all criteria are met and the household does not request an interview, the case manager may waive the recertification interview and authorize the case.

- *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* none

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline*: 2009

- **Telephone interviews.** In 2002, DTA began encouraging case managers to offer telephone interviews as an alternative to face-to-face interviews whenever a potential hardship was evident in the household. In 2004, DTA obtained a waiver allowing telephone interviews without hardship at recertification, but DTA used hardship rules to exempt many new applicants (including those who were working, elderly, disabled, lived far from a DTS office, or had transportation or child care issues) from face-to-face interviews on a case-by-case basis, documenting the hardship in each case record. In 2009, FNS approved a waiver for Massachusetts to use telephone rather than face-to-face interviews at both application and recertification, without documentation of hardship.

  - *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* Broad application of hardship exemption began in 2002; a waiver for recertification interviews was approved in 2004, a waiver extension was approved in 2006, and the waiver was expanded to include initial application interviews in 2009

- **Broad-based categorical eligibility.** DTA has implemented broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE). In its initial implementation in 2001, receipt of DTA's "Help for Those in Need: A Resource Brochure" conferred categorical eligibility to households with children younger than 19 or a pregnant woman and with incomes no higher than 200 percent of the federal poverty level. DTA's resource brochure contains information on available programs for low-income households. In 2008, Massachusetts expanded BBCE to all SNAP households authorized to receive services described in DTA's resource brochure with incomes no higher than 200 percent of the federal poverty level for households with elderly or disabled members and with incomes no higher than 130 percent of the federal poverty level for nonelderly and nondisabled households with no children younger than 19.

  - *Status*: fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TAFDC, TANF, and SSI

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2001, expanded 2008

- **Department of Mental Health and Department of Mental Retardation group home partnerships.** In 2004, DTA began testing a simplified application process for residents of licensed group homes run by the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and Department of Mental Retardation (DMR). Later that year, the process was expanded statewide. DMH's and DMR's licensed group homes staffs gather information and submit applications from residents of their homes to a designated DTA local office, where the applications are processed. Group homes' staffs also serve as authorized representatives, which allows for DTA contact/clarifications and a streamlined approval process.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* piloted first, then expanded statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2004

- **Standard medical deductions.** FNS approved DTA's request for a waiver allowing a standard medical deduction of $90 per month for households verifying allowable medical expenses for elderly or disabled persons of between $35 and $125 per month (Rowe et al. 2010).

  - *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* waiver approved 2007, implemented 2008

- **Transitional benefits.** DTA provides transitional SNAP benefits for five months after clients move off of TANF.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2004

- **Revolving door break-in-service policy.** DTA allows households to reopen recently closed SNAP cases without submitting a new application. This practice became FNS policy in 2010.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2006

- **Automatic denials.** DTA automatically denies applications if the applicant does not respond to a request for verification before the deadline.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* none

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* 2002

- **Streamlined process for households losing Unemployment Compensation benefits.** DTA delays the interview and verification process for households, confirmed by the Department of Unemployment Insurance, that have exhausted their UI benefit and have qualified for expedited SNAP benefits.

    - *Status:* temporary waiver

    - *Other programs affected:* none

    - *Scope:* statewide

    - *Timeline*: June-December 2010

- **College Student Policy.** This policy allows many low-income students attending community colleges to access SNAP benefits. Before 2010, college students were eligible for SNAP only if they worked at least 20 hours per week or participated in a federal work–study program. In 2010, DTA changed the policy to include students who attend a Perkins-compliant (vocationally oriented) program in one of the state community colleges.

    - *Status:* fully implemented

    - *Other programs affected:* none

    - *Scope:* statewide

    - *Timeline:* 2010

- **Self-declaration of shelter and utility costs.** DTA allows clients to self-declare shelter and utility costs. This policy was implemented as a major effort in streamlining the verification process to facilitate efficient application processing.

    - *Status:* fully implemented

    - *Other programs affected:* none

    - *Scope:* statewide

    - *Timeline:* 2010

- **Exclusion of federal tax return for eligibility determination and benefit amount.** This exclusion allows federal tax returns to be excluded as countable income in determining SNAP eligibility and monthly benefit amount.

    - *Status:* fully implemented

    - *Other programs affected:* none

    - *Scope:* statewide

    - *Timeline:* 2010

Table I.3.1. Summary of Modernization Activities, Massachusetts

Type of Modernization Activity	Description of Activity	Waiver Required	Other Programs Affected			Geographic Scope
			TANF	Medicaid	Other	
Restructuring of Administrative Functions	Staff specialization – pilot (intake/ongoing)	No				13 local offices
	Staff specialization – localized initiative (intake/ongoing)	No				2 local offices
	Centralized application processing	No				Statewide
	Brockton call center pilot[a]	No	X[b]			1 local office
	Central call center	No				Statewide
	Outstationed SNAP workers	No				4 satellite offices, 12 outreach centers
Expanding Applications of Technology	Updated eligibility system platform	No	X		X	Statewide
	Online application	No			X	statewide
	Online screening tool	No			X	Statewide
	Online account information	No	X	X		Statewide
	Document submission by email	No				Select local offices
	DTA Automated hotline	No				Statewide
	Document imaging	No	X		X	Piloted[c]
	BEACON data warehouses	No	X		X	Statewide
Partnering with Community Organizations	SNAP Outreach Partner Reimbursement Project	No				Statewide
	Community organization staff assist with intake and outreach	No				Statewide
	SNAP satellites collocated with community oranizations	No				4 satellite offices, 12 outreach centers
	Community organization created first online application	No				Statewide
	FoodSource hotline	No				Statewide
	Reaching the Latino Working Poor	No				2 cities

Type of Modernization Activity	Description of Activity	Waiver Required	Other Programs Affected			Geographic Scope
			TANF	Medicaid	Other	
Policy Changes	Extended certification periods	No				Statewide
	Shortened application	No				Statewide
	Simplified reporting	Yes				Statewide
	Combined application project (CAP)	No			X	Statewide
	Elderly/disabled recertification interview waiver	Yes				Statewide
	Telephone interviews	Yes				Statewide
	Broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE)	No	X		X	Statewide
	Simplified applications for group home residents	No				Statewide
	Standard medical deductions	Yes				Statewide
	Transitional benefits	No	X			Statewide
	Revolving door break-in-service policy	No				Statewide
	Automatic denials	No				Statewide
	Streamlined process for households losing Unemployment Compensation benefits	Yes			X	Statewide
	College Student Policy	No				Statewide
	Self-declaration of shelter and utility costs	No				Statewide
	Exclusion of federal tax returns for eligibility determination and benefit amounts	No				Statewide

Source: Data were collected from interviews with state and local agency officials and community partners, state agency documents and websites, FNS's website and waivers database, and SNAP modernization studies conducted by the Urban Institute and Mathematica.

[a] The Brockton call center is not operational.

[b] The Brockton call center served cash assistance clients before August, 2010.

[c] The document imaging pilot was implemented in the North Shore local office in 2009, but is no longer operational.

Timeline for Restructuring of Administrative Functions

- **2007:** Brockton call center piloted.

- **2008:** SNAP workers outstationed.

- **2009:** Application processing staff centralized in WAU. Separation of intake and case maintenance functions implemented through localized initiative in Fitchburg and Holyoke.

- **2010:** Boston Central Office call center.

- **2012:** Separation of intake and case maintenance functions expanded to 11 other TAOs (13 total statewide).

Timeline for Expanding Applications of Technology

- **2004:** First online application available. VG Provider View online application launched.

- **2006:** VG Consumer View piloted. SNAP data warehouse developed.

- **2007:** VG Consumer View expanded statewide, with eligibility screening tool and electronic signature functionality. BEACON III eligibility system platform update began. SNAP InfoShare website implemented.

- **2008:** Document imaging planning began. (Development and implementation stalled.)

- **2009:** Document imaging pilot in North Shore. **2010:** VG MAP launched. Documentation submission by email pilot.

- **2011:** Automated SNAP hotline.

Timeline for Partnering with Community Organizations

- **2002:** Community organization staff perform outreach and application assistance via VG Provider View.

- **2004:** Community organization creates first online application.

- **2005:** Collaboration with Project Bread on FoodSource hotline.

- **2009:** Collaboration with Project Bread on Reaching the Latino Working Poor project.

- **2010:** Outreach Partner Reimbursement Program launched under the administration of the UMMS with six partners in its initial year.

Timeline for Policy Changes

- **2001:** BBCE implemented.

- **2002:** Telephone interviews for many new applicants implemented. Application shortened. Simplified reporting implemented. Automatic denials implemented.

- **2004:** Waiver for telephone interviewing at recertification approved. Application process for group home residents simplified. Transitional benefits provided for clients moving off TANF.

- **2005:** CAP begun.

- **2006:** Waiver for telephone interviewing at recertification extended. Revolving door break-in-service policy allows recently closed SNAP cases to reopen without submitting a new application.

- **2007:** Waiver for standard medical deduction approved.

- **2008:** BBCE. Certification periods extended. Application shortened for elderly applicants.

- **2009:** Waiver for telephone interviewing expanded to include initial application. Waiver of recertification interview for certain elderly or disabled household with no earned income approved.

- **2010:** Streamlined process for households losing UI. College Student Policy. Self-declaration of shelter and utility costs. Exclusion of federal tax return for eligibility determination and benefit amount.

Figure I.3.1. Timeline of Modernization Activities, Massachusetts

Modernization Activity	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Pilot – Staff Specialization (intake/ongoing)												▓	
Localized Initiative – Staff Specialization (intake/ongoing)									▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Centralized Application Processing									▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Brockton Call Center Pilot							▓	▓	▓	▓			
Central Call Center										▓	▓	▓	▓
Outstationed SNAP Workers								▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Updated Eligibility System Platform								▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Online Application[a]					▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Online Screening Tool								▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Online Account Information										▓	▓	▓	▓
Email Document Submission										▓	▓	▓	
DTA Automated Hotline												▓	▓
Document Imaging							▓						
BEACON Data Warehouse								▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
SNAP Outreach Partner Reimbursement Project										▓	▓	▓	▓
Community Organization Staff Assist with Intake and Outreach			▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓

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Modernization Activity	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
SNAP Satellites Collocated with Community Organizations									■	■	■	■	■
Community Organization Created First Online Application					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
FoodSource Hotline						■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Reaching the Latino Working Poor in Massachusetts Project										■	■	■	■
Extended Certification Period									■	■	■	■	■
Shortened Application			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Simplified Reporting			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Combined Application Project						■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Elderly/Disabled with No Earned Income Recertification Interview Waiver										■	■	■	■
Telephone Interviews			░	░	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Broad-based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE)		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Simplified Applications for Group Home Residents					░	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Standard Medical Deductions								■	■	■	■	■	■
Transitional Benefits					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Revolving Door Break-in-Service Policy							■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Automatic Denials			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Modernization Activity	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Streamlined Process for Households Losing Unemployment Compensation											▓		
College Student Policy											▓	▓	▓
Declaration of Shelter and Utility Costs											░	░	░
Exclusion of Federal Tax Returns for Eligibility and Benefit Determination												▓	▓

Source: Data were collected from interviews with state and local agency officials and community partners, state agency documents and websites, FNS's website and waivers database, and SNAP modernization studies conducted by the Urban Institute and Mathematica.

[a] The VG Provider View was launched in August 2004. The VG Consumer View was piloted in February 2006 and expanded statewide in November 2007.

░   Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.

▓   Initiative in implementation statewide.

How Modernization Profile Was Developed

The Massachusetts modernization profile was compiled using information collected from a variety of sources. Two previous SNAP modernization studies performed on the behalf of USDA's FNS—the first conducted by the Urban Institute and the other by Mathematica—resulted in several reports that provided a firm foundation regarding modernization efforts in Massachusetts. The study team putting together this profile also had access to and made use of the original data collected for the Mathematica-led research study.

The profile also relied on information drawn from extensive reviews of online resources—for example, FNS's website, the FNS waivers database, Massachusetts' SNAP website, local partner websites, and national advocacy group websites. Most significantly, the profile was informed by documents collected directly from DTA and local community partners, as well as interviews conducted in late 2011 and early 2012 with state and local agency officials and community partners.

Massachusetts provided comments on an early version of the profile in September 2011 and again before publication. When appropriate, we incorporated comments and suggestions to provide clarity and ensure accuracy.

List of Selected References

1. Castner, Laura, Amy Wodarek O'Reilly, Kevin Conway, Maura Bardos, and Emily Sama-Miller. "Performance Measurement for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Modernization Initiatives: Final Report." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, 2012.

2. Keefe, Kathleen, Emily Sama-Miller, Laura Castner, Maura Bardos, Elizabeth Clary, Sarah Wissel, and Larry Vittoriano. "Performance Measurement for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Modernization Initiatives: Individual State Findings." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, 2012.

3. O'Brien, C., P. Holcomb, R. Koralek, J. Parnes, N. Pindus, and G. Rowe. "Enhancing Food Stamp Certification: Food Stamp Modernization Efforts." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, August 2007.

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5. Trippe, C., and J. Gillooly. "Non-Cash Categorical Eligibility for SNAP: State Policies and the Number and Characteristics of SNAP Households Categorically Eligible Through These Policies." Memo submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, July 23, 2010.

APPENDIX I.4

STATE PROFILE – UTAH

PROFILE OF SNAP MODERNIZATION INITIATIVES IN UTAH

Summary and Key Features

Utah's modernization efforts began in 1998, after the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) was formed in 1997. The formation of the DWS consolidated all employment and training programs—including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Unemployment Insurance (UI), and Employment Security—into a one-stop service delivery model. Originally, the state followed a model that involved centralizing program eligibility. Since 1998, the state has overcome some initial challenges by implementing a statewide document imaging system and obtaining a waiver of face-to-face interviews at application and recertification. Utah has undertaken additional modernization efforts, including call centers, online applications, use of several new electronic databases, restructured Eligibility Services Division (ESD) teams, telecommuting for staff, simplified income change reporting, and waived interview scheduling requirements. The goals of the modernization efforts are to increase access and create efficiencies to reduce costs. This profile captures modernization initiatives in Utah as of early 2012. At the end of this profile, Table I.4.1 and Figure I.4.1 provide a summary and timeline of modernization activities in Utah.

Background on SNAP in Utah

SNAP is administered at the state level in Utah. The state's SNAP caseload was more than 114,000 households (nearly 279,000 individuals) by December 2011, an increase of 240 percent since July 1, 2000. In December 2011, DWS received almost 13,000 initial applications.[1]

Modernization Activities

Restructuring of Administrative Functions

- **Call center.** Utah operates a virtual call center throughout the state. The virtual call center consists of staff located in four main call centers, local offices, and telecommuting environments answering calls. Callers use a single toll-free telephone number, which is then routed to staff located in various locations. The call center uses an interactive voice response (IVR) telephone system. The IVR system accepts change reporting and recertifications. Initial and recertification interviews are conducted through the call center.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* unknown

  - *Scope:* initially in one region (Salt Lake City), expanded statewide

  - *Timeline:* one region 2001, statewide 2009

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[1] Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Utah DWS.

- **Centralization of staff.** Utah centralized its eligibility functions administratively, eliminating the state's five-region structure and creating the ESD. All aspects of eligibility—including operations, program and policy, quality, and training—are under the ESD, which established specialized administrative functions, including those of policy specialists, trainers, investigators, benefit calculators, business office staff, quality control, fair hearings, and business analysts, as well as specialized teams for different programs, all of whom also manage SNAP cases. ESD staff organized as eligibility teams consisting of one supervisor and 15 eligibility workers. Most ESD staff are located at one of four call centers, with the remainder working from local offices or telecommuting. An agent is responsible for a case from start to decision, but when a client calls, any agent on the team can take the call.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, Child Care, Medicaid, and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

  - *Scope:* piloted in one region, then expanded statewide

  - *Timeline:* piloted 2006, statewide 2009

- **Specialization of staff functions.** The creation of four call center locations involved specialization of ESD staff in those locations. Call center staff accept applications, conduct interviews, process change reporting, make referrals, and handle case status calls. Staff in local DWS employment centers, part of the Workforce Development Division, assist walk-in customers with applications, with a focus on training customers on the myCase product.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, Child Care, Medicaid, and CHIP

  - *Scope:* call center specialization began in one region then expanded statewide

  - *Timeline:* began 2000 (O'Brien et al. 2007), expanded 2007 (O'Brien et al. 2007)

- **Telecommuting.** The state initiated a telecommuting program that permits eligibility staff to work from home while participating fully as case managers. The telecommuting program began in 2004 with 10 workers. As of early 2010, approximately 25 percent of staff participated in the program. To ensure data security, computers used by telecommuters do not have hard drives but connect directly to a server and to the call center environment.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, Child Care, Medicaid, and CHIP

  - *Scope:* piloted regionally, expanded statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2004

- **Outstationed staff.** Utah DWS has outstationed staff, mostly at medical provider locations. These staff perform SNAP eligibility determination when requested.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* unknown

- *Scope:* statewide, although concentrated in the Salt Lake City area

- *Timeline:* 2000

- **Integration of Medicaid program.** Eligibility determinations for medical-only cases in Utah, of which there are 60,000, were moved from the Utah Department of Health to the DWS in 2007. The purpose of moving these cases was to avoid duplication of effort.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, Child Care, Medicaid, and CHIP

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2007

Expanding Applications of Technology

- **Online application.** SNAP applications are available online, including at all local SNAP offices and at informal community partner organization sites. Applicants can enter information, sign the application using an electronic signature, and submit it electronically. Staff at local staff offices are available to assist with the application, and there is an online chat tool, staffed during normal business hours, from which applicants can receive online assistance. As of March 2012, approximately 70 percent of applications were submitted online.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* Utah uses a single combined application for SNAP, TANF, Child Care, Medicaid, and CHIP

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* pilot 2007, statewide 2008

- **Online screening tool.** The online screening tool application enables users to determine programs for which they might be eligible, including SNAP; future enhancements plan to import screening data directly into the online application.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, Child Care, Medicaid, and CHIP

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2009

- **Online account information.** Utah's online client account interface is called myCase. Applicants and participants can access account information on the site. Clients can access the online screening tool and application through myCase. They can also complete online recertifications and chat with eligibility workers through myCase. Finally, clients can choose to receive electronic notifications. They can decline to receive paper notices and receive alerts through email or texts that indicate that new electronic correspondence is ready to view in myCase. myCase replaced the previous online case status system, E-Query. E-Query accounts included a 12-month history of information on program receipt, benefit start and close dates, benefit status, reasons for denial, and all received verification materials.

- - *Status:* fully implemented

- - *Other programs affected:* TANF, Child Care, Medicaid, and CHIP

- - *Scope:* statewide

- - *Timeline:* E-Query was created in 2008; myCase replaced it in November 2010

- **Document imaging and electronic case records.** [2] Utah uses a central Imaging Operations (IO) unit to scan client documentation and case records and store them electronically in a single content manager system that is available statewide. IO uses two scanners to process 80 to 85 percent of the state's applications and verification documents. Local offices also have the capability to scan documents to load into the same statewide system. When documents have been scanned, staff are alerted by the Electronic Resource and Eligibility Product (eRep) system, which generates staff workloads.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* unknown

  - *Scope:* access to electronically stored documents is available statewide and local offices have scanning capability

  - *Timeline:* document imaging began 1998 (Link 2007), centralization of scanning 2006

- **Online data verification system.** eFind is a web-based data verification system that caseworkers use to access 20 federal and state databases, including the Social Security Administration (SSA), federal and state UI, alien registration, motor vehicles, vital statistics, national new hires database, and child support. The system reduces the need for staff to access multiple systems and manually compare them.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* unknown

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2004

- **Online customer directory.** The Utah customer directory crosses six different data systems, linking all customer information using a personal identification number.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, Child Care, Medicaid, and CHIP

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2007

- **Automated eligibility system.** Utah's eRep is a web-based decision-support eligibility system that determines eligibility for more than 60 federal and state programs. In addition to its eligibility determination functions, the system includes a resource and referral web component, online application, high-level client directory, and searchable electronic policy

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[2] This initiative was supported by funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

manual with links to related policies and procedures. The system also automated certain processes, such as generating customer correspondence and alerts.

- *Status:* piloted

- *Other programs affected:* TANF, Child Care, Medicaid, and CHIP

- *Scope:* initially piloted regionally, expanded statewide

- *Timeline:* initial modules (such as the online policy manual) deployed 2003–2004; main eligibility determination system pilot began 2008; statewide expansion rolled out over 18 months, by program, ending in June 2010

- **Learning Management System Database.** Utah uses the Learning Management System Database to track all employee trainings. Information stored in the database include the type of training completed (instructor-led or web-based), the employees' status in progression through the modules of a training class, and evaluation results.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* unknown

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline*: unknown

Partnering with Community Orgniazations

- **Application assistance.[3]** SNAP applications are available online at informal community partner organization sites. Partners are community agencies that serve similar populations, such as senior centers, food banks, community centers, hospitals, and schools. Partners assist with the application process and provide computers and other equipment to access online services. This increased in 2008 when the online application was deployed statewide. Through a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), several partners received funding to help pay for computers, printers, and other equipment needed to facilitate online services. In exchange, the partners have committed to using the equipment to help clients access services.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* Utah uses a single combined application for SNAP, Financial Assistance, Child Care, and Medical Assistance

  - *Scope:* regional pilots, then expanded statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2007

- **Third-party myCase access.** Community organizations, relatives, caregivers, and other client advocates can act on a client's behalf using third-party access on the myCase client portal. With authorization from the client, advocates can apply for benefits, report changes, check application status, and complete online recertification forms.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

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[3] This initiative was supported by funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

- *Other programs affected:* TANF, Child Care, Medicaid, and CHIP

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* 2012

Policy Changes

- **Telephone interviews.[4]** In Utah, all eligibility interviews are conducted via telephone, unless specifically requested to be conducted in person. A waiver approved by FNS allows initial certification interviews to occur over the telephone, rather than face to face, without documenting hardship. This waiver was initially limited to half of the state caseload, but was later extended statewide. Before receiving the waiver to conduct initial application interviews via telephone, a waiver was approved for recertification interviews via telephone.

  - *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* piloted with call center activities in one region (Salt Lake City), then expanded statewide

  - *Timeline:* piloted 1999; waiver of face-to-face interview at recertification approved 2003; waiver of face-to-face interview at initial application approved 2006 for half of caseload and 2008 statewide

- **Simplified reporting.** Utah adopted a simplified reporting option for all clients except elderly and disabled households with earned income. Under simplified reporting, clients are certified for six months and are not required to report changes that do not raise their incomes above 130 percent of the federal poverty level.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* unknown

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2005

- **Simplified application.** The paper application was streamlined and simplified in 2004. As of early 2012, 25 percent of clients use the paper application; most, 75 percent, are submitted online.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* Utah uses a single combined application for SNAP, Financial Assistance, Child Care, and Medical Assistance

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2004

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[4] This initiative was supported by funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

- **Interview scheduling requirements waived.** A waiver was requested and approval received from FNS to allow clients to complete interviews at a time most convenient for them, rather than scheduling a specific time and date for each interview in advance. After completing their application, clients can call a toll-free number at their convenience for their telephone interview. As of early 2010, half of clients completed their interview the same day their application was filed.

    - *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

    - *Other programs affected:* none

    - *Scope:* piloted in one region (Central/Salt Lake City), then expanded statewide

    - *Timeline:* piloted 2006, expanded statewide 2007

- **EBT card distribution by mail.** Electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards are distributed via mail, instead of requiring clients to pick them up at regional offices. The card that is mailed is not activated until the client's eligibility has been established. Customers can be issued an EBT card at a local office if needed on a case-by-case basis.

    - *Status:* fully implemented

    - *Other programs affected:* unknown

    - *Scope:* statewide

    - *Timeline:* 2007

- **Break-in-service policy.** Utah implemented a revolving door waiver that allows staff to reestablish a client's eligibility within 30 days of the case closure date without completion of a new application. Previously, cases that were closed when required information or verification was not provided within a certain period were forced to repeat the entire application process. This practice became FNS policy in 2010.

    - *Status:* fully implemented

    - *Other programs affected:* unknown

    - *Scope:* statewide

    - *Timeline:* waiver approved 2002

Table I.4.1. Summary of Modernization Activities, Utah

Type of Modernization Activity	Description of Activity	Waiver Required	Other Programs Affected			Geographic Scope
			TANF	Medicaid	Other	
Restructuring of Administrative Functions	Call center	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Specialization of staff functions	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Centralization of staff	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Telecommuting	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Outstationed staff	No				Statewide (mostly concentrated in Salt Lake City area)
	Integration of Medicaid program	No	x	x	x	Statewide
Expanding Applications of Technology	Online application	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Online screening tool	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Online account information	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Documentation submission by fax	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Document imaging	No				Statewide
	Online data verification system	No			x	Statewide
	Online customer directory	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Automated eligibility system	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Learning Management System Database	No				Statewide
Partnering with Community Organizations	Application assistance	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Third-party online account access	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Telephone interviews	Yes				Statewide
Policy Changes	Simplified reporting	Yes				Statewide
	Simplified application	No	x	x	x	Statewide
	Interview scheduling requirements waived	Yes				Statewide
	EBT card distribution by mail	No				Statewide
	Break-in-service policy	No				Statewide

Sources: Data were collected from interviews with state and local agency officials and community partners, state agency documents and websites, FNS's website and waivers database, and SNAP modernization studies conducted by the Urban Institute and Mathematica.

Timeline for Restructuring of Administrative Functions

- **2000:** Staff outstationed.

- **2004:** Telecommuting program piloted.

- **2006:** ESD proactive eligibility teams piloted.

- **2007:** Medicaid program integrated.

- **2009:** ESD established.

Timeline for Expanding Applications of Technology

- **1998:** Call center established in one region.

- **1999:** Document imaging piloted.

- **2003:** Online account information available.

- **2004:** efind implemented.

- **2007:** Online application piloted. Call centers established in two additional regions, and IVR implemented. IO launched. Online customer directory launched.

- **2008:** Online application available statewide. Automated eligibility system piloted.

- **2009:** Online screening tool launched.

- **2009:** Online screening tool expanded statewide.

Timeline for Partnering with Community Organizations

- **2007:** Online applications available at community partner sites.

Timeline for Policy Changes

- **1997:** Utah DWS is formed by consolidating all employment and training programs into a one-stop service delivery method.

- **1998:** First DWS modernization effort begins with plans to centralize all of eligibility.

- **2002:** Revolving door eligibility waiver approved.

- **2004:** Application simplified.

- **2005:** Waiver approved allowing simplified reporting.

- **2006:** Waiver of interview scheduling approved for one region. Certification period changed. Standard utility allowance adopted.

- **2007:** Waiver of interview scheduling approved statewide. Waiver approved allowing recertification interviews to be conducted via telephone. Distribution of EBT cards via mail implemented.

- **2008:** Waiver approved allowing initial application interviews to be conducted via telephone.

Figure I.4.1. Timeline of Modernization Activities, Utah

Modernization Activity	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Call Center															
Specialization of Staff Functions															
Centralization of Staff															
Telecommuting															
Outstationed Staff															
Integration of Medicaid Program															
Online Application															
Online Screening Tool															
Online Account Information															
Documentation Submission by Fax															
Document Imaging															
Online Data Verification System															
Online Customer Directory															
Automated Eligibility System															
Payment Portal															
Learning Management System Database															
Application Assistance															
Telephone Interviews															
Simplified Reporting															
Expanded Categorical Eligibility															

Modernization Activity	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Simplified Application								███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███
Interview Scheduling Requirements Waived								░░░	███	███	███	███	███	███	███
EBT Card Distribution by Mail									███	███	███	███	███	███	███
Certification Period								███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███
Simplified Eligibility Requirements								███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███
Break-in-Service Policy					███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███	███

Sources: Data were collected from interviews with state and local agency officials and community partners, state agency documents and websites, FNS's website and waivers database, and SNAP modernization studies conducted by the Urban Institute and Mathematica.

░░░ Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.

███ Initiative in implementation statewide.

How Modernization Profile Was Developed

The Utah modernization profile was compiled using information collected from a variety of sources. Two previous SNAP modernization studies performed on the behalf of USDA's FNS—the first conducted by the Urban Institute and the other by Mathematica—resulted in several reports that provided a firm foundation regarding modernization efforts in Utah. The study team putting together this profile also had access to and made use of the original data collected for the Mathematica-led research study.

The profile also relied on information drawn from extensive reviews of online resources—for example, FNS's website, the FNS waivers database, Utah's SNAP website, local partner websites, and national advocacy group websites. Most significantly, the profile was informed by documents collected directly from DTA and local community partners, as well as interviews conducted in late 2011 and early 2012 with state and local agency officials and community partners.

Utah provided comments on an early version of the profile in September 2011 and again before publication. When appropriate, we incorporated comments and suggestions to provide clarity and ensure accuracy.

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5. Trippe, C., and J. Gillooly. "Non-Cash Categorical Eligibility for SNAP: State Policies and the Number and Characteristics of SNAP Households Categorically Eligible Through These Policies." Memo submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, July 23, 2010.

APPENDIX I.5

STATE PROFILE – WASHINGTON

PROFILE OF SNAP MODERNIZATION INITIATIVES IN WASHINGTON

Summary and Key Features

Washington's modernization activities were motivated by a decrease in staffing levels following a statewide hiring freeze and increased caseload resulting from the economic downturn. Additionally, the department wanted to improve access and participation in SNAP. Key modernization initiatives included:

- An automated interactive voice response (IVR) system;

- An interactive online application, eligibility screening tool, and online account for change reporting and recertification;

- A document management system with electronic case records and workload management tools; a business process reengineering project (called Service Delivery Redesign [SDR]) that changed local office structure to a task-based model;

- A statewide virtual call center with specialization of staff;

- Contracting with community partners to provide outreach and assistance with the application process; and

- Policy changes such as telephone interviews, simplified reporting, and broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE).

Since implementing these changes, Washington has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) for payment accuracy and for an improved payment error rate and program access index (PAI). This profile captures modernization initiatives in Washington as of early 2012. At the end of this profile, Table I.5.1 and Figure I.5.1 provide a summary and timeline of the modernization activities in Washington.

Background on SNAP in Washington

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is administered at the state level in Washington, where SNAP operations are managed through the three Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Community Services Division (CSD) regions. DSHS operates a network of 53 community service offices (CSOs) throughout the state. In addition to SNAP, CSOs offer cash assistance, medical, child care subsidies, social services, and general assistance to vulnerable adults and children. The state's SNAP caseload was over 581,000 households (more than 1.1 million individuals) as of December 2011, an increase of 320 percent from 2000. In the same month, DSHS received over 34,000 initial applications.[1]

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[1] Mathematica tabulations of data provided by the Washington DSHS.

Modernization Activities

Restructuring of Administrative Functions

- **SDR/business reengineering.** DSHS implemented a business process reengineering project called SDR. It focused on streamlining and standardizing DSHS processes across local offices so that work could flow between locations and capacity created by the department's efficiency measures could be maximized. DSHS transitioned from a traditional caseworker model to a process-based business model. Eligibility workers' workloads are task-based and staff are organized into teams that receive their tasks from different task-based work queues. Under SDR, eligibility workers in local offices are organized into specialized roles. Each office has one or two navigators who greet clients as they enter and help them check in using lobby automated queuing systems. Each local office has between five and seven teams. The green team processes SNAP; medical; and aged, blind, and disabled (ABD) medical assistance applications, including conducting the initial eligibility interview. The red team processes WorkFirst Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Additional Requirements for Emergent Needs (AREN), and Diversion Cash Assistance (DCA) applications, and the blue team conducts eligibility reviews. There are also teams to process applications that are pended, process changes, and address questions, as well as teams for social service and WorkFirst questions. DSHS also shifted to a same-day service model, also called first contact resolution, in which staff provide application and interview services at first contact, rather than making appointments for future dates, thereby eliminating extra client visits. Lobby layouts were improved to manage client flow and implement the same look and feel for DSHS offices statewide. DSHS also developed a process to proactively work eligibility reviews throughout the month, rather than waiting until the end of the certification month

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* other CSD programs, including TANF, general assistance, medical assistance, WorkFirst, and Working Connections child care

  - *Scope:* pilot in five offices, subsequent expansion statewide

  - *Timeline:* pilot 2009, statewide implementation October 2010

- **Call centers.** Washington's 41 local and regional call centers (including three regionally centralized call centers and a larger number of small, CSO-based operations) were unified into a single virtual call center that shares work across locations. DSHS has established a single, statewide toll-free number that clients can use to reach virtual call center staff at any location and a separate toll-free number for employers and landlords to use for verifications. An IVR application automatically populates client information on call center staff's computer screens when they answer telephone calls. The IVR application automatically opens an existing client's electronic case record when possible or pops up a record for staff to enter the purpose of the call for new clients. Call center staff focus on specific services, including accepting and processing changes, providing general information and referrals, managing ongoing batch maintenance work and associated telephone calls for cash and food assistance, conducting telephone interviews at recertification, receiving and processing recertifications, completing medical and childcare applications and related maintenance, and receiving and processing faxes through the Hub Imaging Unit. Application interview calls flow through the call center and are directed to the local office for a callback to complete the process. Management of call centers

transitioned from local management to a single statewide administrator and management structure. The call centers now receive 90 percent of changes in the state (Keefe et al. 2012).

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* other CSD programs, including TANF, general assistance, medical assistance, WorkFirst, and Working Connections child care2

- *Scope:* initially regional, now statewide

- *Timeline:* statewide 2010

- **Staff realignment.** To address workload increases and a simultaneous reduction in allocated positions, DSHS reallocated staff resources to shift more staff to frontline eligibility work. The goals were to increase the proportion of the workforce that are financial workers, slightly modify the proportion that are WorkFirst (TANF) program specialists and slightly decrease the ratio of social workers, and establish consistent supervisors. Clerical staff were also significantly decreased. To accomplish this goal, DSHS reduced regional and local office administration, reallocated supervisory positions using the increased staff-to-supervisor ratio, and reallocated social worker and office administrative support positions (providing career development opportunities whene possible). Some of the needed changes were achieved by reallocating vacant positions resulting from attrition and a hiring freeze in effect at the time; others were achieved by staff who volunteered for reallocation.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* other CSD programs, including TANF, general assistance, medical assistance, WorkFirst, and Working Connections child care

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2009–2010

- **Mobile offices.** Using a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation along with SNAP high performance bonus funds from USDA, the department designed and had built two so called offices on wheels with the full capabilities of regular offices. One mobile office provides services in the east side of the state and the other on the west side. The mobile offices are primarily designed to conduct community outreach and connect households with households with SNAP benefits. However, they also respond to emergencies and natural disasters and are deployed to areas as needed.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* other CSD programs, including TANF, general assistance, medical assistance, WorkFirst, and Working Connections child care

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* June 2010

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2 All child care work and stand-alone medical cases are managed in the call center.

Expanding Applications of Technology

- **Online application.** Washington's online application is accessible to the public directly or through community organization partners through its online system, Washington Connection. To promote the use of the online application, DSHS has placed computer workstations in all of its lobbies for quick and easy access and developed a community partnership program to expand access to services beyond DSHS's walls. The original online application, implemented in the early 2000s, is obsolete and is no longer available. The current online application has functionality that enables applicants to save their applications to complete and submit at a later time and to submit their applications with electronic signatures. Clients can also download the application to print and submit a hard-copy. Data from online applications automatically generates an image of the online application in the department's document management system, DMS/Barcode, and transfers screening data into the state's eligibility system, Automated Client Eligibility System (ACES). More than 50 percent of applications are submitted online.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* other CSD programs, including TANF, general assistance, medical assistance, WorkFirst, and Working Connections child care

  - *Scope:* piloted in one region, then expanded statewide

  - *Timeline:* piloted 2000, expanded statewide 2001 (version obsolete after 2009); new website launched 2009; Washington Connection implemented January 2011

- **Online screening tool.** The online system, Washington Connection, includes an eligibility screening tool that calculates potential eligibility for SNAP and other CSD programs. The tool prompts the user to answer a series of questions to determine potential eligibility for SNAP and other programs. After the user has answered all of the screening tool questions, it provides information on which programs he or she might be eligible for as well as a checklist for the client to select program(s) to which he or she would like to apply and a link to the online application. The user is also given the option of copying information entered in the eligibility screening tool to the online application to avoid duplicating data entry.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* other CSD programs, including TANF, general assistance, medical assistance, WorkFirst, and Working Connections child care

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* April 2011

- **Online change reporting and recertification.** Clients can report changes of circumstances and complete recertifications online via Washington Connection. Partners assisting households have access to the online change reporting system, with a separate log-in ID and different access privileges from staff or clients.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* other CSD programs, including TANF, general assistance, medical assistance, WorkFirst, and Working Connections child care

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* October 2011

- **Document imaging.** DSHS has five document imaging units, known as hub imaging units (HIUs). HIUs receive hard-copy and faxed documents for imaging from local offices and from clients. DSHS established a central fax server in January 2010 that automatically routes verification documents submitted by fax to the HIU, and a single business-reply envelope for use statewide in July 2010. DSHS plans to develop two additional methods for submission: (1) using a client email address for client communications; and (2) enhancing online application for submission of verification documents by adding instructions and reminders at various points, making forms available to download, and allowing clients to scan verification documents for submission with online applications. Hard-copy and faxed documents that have not yet been processed by an eligibility worker are referred to as hot mail and must be sorted, scanned, indexed, and attached to a client's electronic case record within 24 hours of receipt. Hard-copy documents that have already been processed by an eligibility worker in a local office and need only -be imaged for the client's electronic case record are referred to as cold mail and must be sorted, imaged, indexed, and attached within five business days of receipt.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* other CSD programs, including TANF, general assistance, medical assistance, WorkFirst, and Working Connections child care

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* piloted in four local offices in 2001, expanded statewide in 2003, centralized fax added in January 2010, business reply envelope added in July 2010

- **Workload management and electronic case records system.** DSHS's document management system, DMS/Barcode, provides workload management tools and stores clients' electronic case records. Applications submitted online automatically stream directly into the DMS/Barcode; paper applications and documents are scanned and attached to a client's electronic case record. For workload management, DMS/Barcode categorizes tasks into three main groups: assisting clients waiting in a local office lobby (queues), completing high-priority follow-up tasks such as calling a client waiting for a telephone interview (ticklers), and completing lower-priority backlogged case work (batch). Tasks in these groups can be generated automatically, as when a client checks in at the lobby automated queuing system, or manually, for instance when a call center agent enters a client into the queue to receive a call-back for an eligibility interview. The system also allows for automatic workload assignment for clients waiting in the lobby and back end backlogged batch work, known as the DMSQ. The DMSQ for back end batch work allows for backlogged work to be processed by any eligibility worker in the state according to the capacity available. The DMSQ batch workload priorities are set at the statewide level; DMSQ local office lobby priorities are set by supervisors. The system allows the state to track wait times and case processing times by action type. Several electronic benefits transaction (EBT) functions were added to the DMS/Barcode suite of applications to automate the request process for EBT recoveries, replacements, and provisional credits. State office EBT staff complete the action and inform the requestor of the action's disposition using the same system screens. Before this functionality, all such requests were made using hard-copy forms that were then faxed.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* other CSD programs, including TANF, general assistance, medical assistance, WorkFirst, and Working Connections child care

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* 2001, EBT functions added in 2009, DMSQ implemented in 2012

- **Standard client check-in system.** Local offices have an automated check-in system that uses touch screen technology to identify why a client is in the office. The system automatically -tracks client wait and interview times, and management reports provide supervisors with real-time information on numbers of clients waiting in the lobby and what they need. The check-in system interfaces with the state's ACES and DMS/Barcode systems.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* All CSD program offerings

  - *Scope:* piloted, then implemented statewide

  - *Timeline:* piloted 2009, fully implemented in October 2010

- **Automated Answer Phone system.** Separate from the call centers, DSHS has an automated system, called Answer Phone that provides clients access to case information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, via a single statewide toll-free number (1-877-980-9220). This system provides basic information on client cases, including the status of applications and documents.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* other CSD programs, including TANF, general assistance, medical assistance, WorkFirst, and Working Connections child care

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2001

- **SNAP website benefit estimator.** DSHS has an informational website available at www.foodhelp.wa.gov. The website includes a benefit estimator for Basic Food. As the user answers questions on a web page, a SNAP benefit amount displayed at the bottom of the page adjusts. It also links to the department's online application. The FoodHelp website is designed to provide information regarding food-related issues, including nutrition education; information on farmer's markets; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program; school meals; and the Basic Food (SNAP) program.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* WIC, free and reduced-price school meals

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2008

- **Linked databases.** The Spider system enables DSHS staff to search for people in linked databases (including Social Security, SSI, Unemployment Compensation, sanctions, and recipient disqualification databases) simultaneously and provides a quick link to the information available in those databases.

    - *Status:* fully implemented

    - *Other programs affected:* Social Security, SSI, Unemployment Compensation

    - *Scope:* statewide

    - *Timeline:* 2001

- **Wireless point-of-sale for farmers' markets.** The 2008 Washington legislature authorized $50,000 to assist Washington farmers' markets in developing the capability to accept wireless electronic payment cards, including EBT cards. Farmers' markets are typically located in nontraditional retail locations and thus frequently do not have access to electricity or land-line telephone connectivity. In these situations, EBT transactions are completed by using manual vouchers. The market uses a wireless point-of-sale (POS) device using cell phone technology to obtain a real-time approval/denial of the requested transaction. If approved, the cardholder is given scrip in the dollar amount of the transaction to use to purchase eligible food items at any of the market stalls. The use of wireless POS terminals enables the markets to not only accept EBT cards for payment, but also credit and debit cards. The manual voucher process is no longer needed, but the use of scrip is still required.

    - *Status:* fully implemented

    - *Other programs affected:* none

    - *Scope:* statewide

    - *Timeline:* 2009

- **Narration templates.** A standard narrative template is used for all case actions to ensure a standardized narrative format and posting and to streamline ACES data entry. Eligibility workers across locations and call center staff rely upon the consistent narratives to match information in the electronic case record to what is required. The narration templates reside in DMS/Barcode and are integrated with the electronic case record and ACES systems.

    - *Status:* piloted

    - *Other programs affected:* other CSD programs, including TANF, general assistance, medical assistance, WorkFirst, and Working Connections child care

    - *Scope:* piloted, then expanded statewide

    - *Timeline:* pilot began in December 2009, fully implemented in October 2010

- **Policy update training tool.** To automate the delivery of policy and procedure changes to staff, DSHS has added a "policy update" module to the existing Learning Management System (LMS), which was purchased in 2008.

    - *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* other CSD programs, including TANF, general assistance, medical assistance, WorkFirst, and Working Connections child care

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* April 2011

- **Operational dashboard.** DSHS deployed an operational dashboard that creates a new state view of all SNAP processes. It helps relevant staff look at day-to-day operations in greater detail and aims to help staff see the effects of resource shifts. Data for the operational dashboard are derived from Barcode subsystems and ACES.

  - *Status:* Phase I implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF, general assistance

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* October 2011

Partnering with Community Organizations

- **Contracts for outreach partners.** DSHS contracts with community organizations throughout the state to inform low-income households about SNAP and to help them apply. Community organizations provide outreach services at food banks, low-income housing, senior centers, grocery stores, community events, and so on. They use a variety of methods to provide application assistance to low-income families, including developing materials relevant to the communities they serve with information about SNAP and the application process. Several outreach contractors have CSO staff schedule time at the community organization location to determine eligibility and conduct interviews. They also take part in community events with other local providers. Community organization contractors can help clients complete the online application, although some work with clients at locations that do not have computers. Community organization contractors include food banks; hospitals; and public health, tribal, and ethnic organizations. Before 2008, community organizations were reimbursed half their costs in providing SNAP outreach and education. In 2008, DSHS changed to performance-based outreach contracts and, in 2009, to payment points tied to the number of new applications received and approved. In 2010, contractors received $160 per application, $100 per approval, and a $50 bonus per approval if the contractor's approval rate was at least 50 percent. Contractors submit monthly reports to DSHS; applications completed by community organizations can be tracked via unique barcode labels, which assign credit for the application to the contractor.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2002, established contracts for outreach partners; 2008, transition from cost reimbursement model to pay-for-performance model; 2009, refined pay points to more accurately reflect actual costs

- **Application assistance and access by community partners.** Under the Community Partnership Initiative, DSHS recruits community organizations serving a large number of

low-income families to put the online SNAP application on their computers and make it available to potential clients at the community organizations' facilities. Training on the online application process was developed and made available to community partners. DSHS has defined four levels of partnership, depending on the equipment and services the partner provides, ranging from the partner having a computer with self-service access to the online SNAP application to providing equipment (including telephone, printer, and fax access) and staff resources for a variety of types of assistance and advice. However, the two higher levels of partnership—in which DSHS would provide equipment or outstationed staff—have not been implemented due to resource constraints. Community partners receive no compensation and they do not perform any eligibility determination tasks with clients.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* medical assistance[3]

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline*: 2009

- **State Nutrition Action Plan.** DSHS participates in the State Nutrition Action Plan, which is intended to foster collaboration and information-sharing across program lines and supports implementation of more integrated nutrition education and promotion activities at state and local levels. The members meet four times a year and include representatives from the state Departments of Health and Commerce and its General Administration, Washington State University, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, theWashington Dairy Council, USDA, and the Children's Alliance. The goal has been to develop and agree on common nutrition messages and delivery strategies for Washington residents.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP), The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), free and reduced-price school lunches

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2003

- **Reaching the Working Poor SNAP Grant.** The Reaching the Underserved/Working Poor SNAP Grant project provided a $500,000 grant to the state to purchase equipment for partners in four pilot counties, which were small, rural communities with few resources, limited access to services, and low SNAP participation. DSHS used the SNAP grant to purchase computers, monitors, and key boards for partners that otherwise would be unable to provide access to DSHS services at their locations due to lack of resources. The computers only provided access to the online application for DSHS services.

  - *Status:* pilot completed

  - *Other programs affected:* none

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[3] Community partners may also assist with medical assistance application, but this varies by location.

-   *Scope:* four pilot counties

-   *Timeline:* grant awarded 2009, implementation 2010

- **Community organizations involved in revising online application.** Advocates worked with DSHS to develop and test the revised online application.

    -   *Status:* fully implemented

    -   *Other programs affected:* other CSD programs, including TANF, general assistance, medical assistance, WorkFirst, and Working Connections child care

    -   *Scope:* statewide application

    -   *Timeline:* 2004

Policy Changes

- **Interview scheduling waiver.** This waiver provides an alternative process to having a specific date and time scheduled for the required SNAP interview at application and recertification. Under this alternative, offices attempt to conduct the interview when the application or recertification is received. If unable to do so, the office sends the household a letter informing it to call for an interview or come to the local office to complete an interview, by two weeks from the date of application for new applications and two weeks before the certification period ends for recertifications. Households failing to complete the interview within this timeframe receive a notice of missed interview.

    -   *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

    -   *Other programs affected:* none

    -   *Scope:* statewide, rolled out office by office with SDR initiatives

    -   *Timeline:* rollout December 2009 through December 2010; in 2011, waiver extended to 2013

- **CAP.** Under the Washington Combined Application Project (WASHCAP), SNAP partners with the Social Security Administration (SSA) for a single specialized statewide call center whose staff complete SNAP eligibility for SSI recipients using a one-page form. Clients must be eligible for SSI, at least 18 years old, unemployed, and either living alone or purchasing and preparing food separately from others in the household. For these individuals, the SSI application and interview with SSA serves those roles for SNAP as well; the certification period is 36 months, to align with SSI; and changes are reported to SSA. SSA notifies DSHS of initial eligibility and client changes via the State Data Exchange (SDX) System in an overnight reporting process.

    -   *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

    -   *Other programs affected:* SSI

    -   *Scope:* statewide

    -   *Timeline:* demonstration project waiver approved 2001, extended in 2006

- **SSI/OASDI change reporting waiver.** The state eliminated the requirement for SNAP households to report changes in SSI or Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance

(OASDI) benefits to DSHS. Washington's State Data Exchange (SDX) and the Beneficiary and Earning Data Exchange (BENDEX) interface automatically to update the household's case in the state's mainframe system.

- *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* SSI, OASDI

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* waiver approved 2005, extended 2007 on an indefinite basis

- **Removed drug-related felonies as condition of eligibility.** DSHS exercised the state option to remove the ban on SNAP receipt by drug felons, by legislative action (SB 6411).

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2004

- **Simplified reporting.** DSHS applied for and received FNS approval for a waiver allowing simplified reporting. This waiver reduces the reporting requirement for all SNAP households, requiring changes to be reported only when household income exceeds 130 percent of the federal poverty level. The waiver also sets Washington as an "act on all changes" state rather than only processing interim changes that would increase benefits. Households with incomes in excess of 200 percent of the federal poverty level must report this change by the 10th day of the month after the date the change occurred.

  - *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* DSHS tries to synchronize the timing of reporting across benefit programs

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* waiver approved 2004, amended to include elderly and disabled households 2009

- **Exclusion of child support paid from income.** Legally obligated child support paid outside of the household is excluded as income, instead of being allowed as an income deduction. The earned income deduction remains 20 percent of gross income, regardless of treatment of support paid as an income exclusion.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2009

- **Reduced verification of household composition.** Under reduced verification requirements for household composition, the state verifies household composition only when it is questionable.

- *Status:* fully implemented

- *Other programs affected:* none

- *Scope:* statewide

- *Timeline:* 2009

- **Student employment hours waiver.** This waiver allows DSHS to average the number of weekly hours a student works for the purposes of determining if a student enrolled in an institution of higher education at least half-time is eligible to receive SNAP benefits.

  - *Status:* waiver approved

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* 2008

- **Telephone interviews.** DSHS received FNS approval for a waiver of face-to-face interviews at initial application and recertification, enabling the state to conduct interviews by telephone without documenting hardship. Before receiving the waiver for initial application, the state used a liberal interpretation of the hardship rules for interviews.

  - *Status:* Waivers approved and fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* none

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* FNS approved waiver of face-to-face interview at recertification 2003, FNS approved waiver of face-to-face interview at initial application 2009

- **BBCE.** DSHS obtained a waiver to implement BBCE. From May 2004 through September 2008, the asset test was eliminated for households with incomes up to 130 percent of the federal poverty level. In October 2008, DSHS expanded BBCE to households with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level, the maximum allowed by federal law.

  - *Status:* waiver approved and fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF

  - *Scope:* statewide

  - *Timeline:* implemented 2004, expanded 2008

- **Transitional food assistance.** DSHS provides transitional food assistance, which continues SNAP benefits for five months for households that leave TANF while receiving SNAP benefits. Transitional benefits are set at the level the household received in the last month of TANF, adjusted for the loss of TANF benefits.

  - *Status:* fully implemented

  - *Other programs affected:* TANF

  - *Scope:* statewide

  Timeline: 2005

Table I.5.1. Summary of Modernization Activities, Washington

Type of Modernization Activity		Waiver Required	Other Programs Affected			Geographic Scope
			TANF	Medicaid	Other	
Restructuring of Administrative Functions	Service Delivery Redesign/business reengineering	No	X	X	X	Statewide
	Statewide virtual call center with Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system	No	X	X	X	Statewide
	Staff realignment	No	X	X	X	Statewide
	Mobile offices	No	X	X	X	Statewide
Expanding Applications of Technology	Online application	No	X	X	X	Statewide
	Online screening tool	No	X	X	X	Statewide
	Online change reporting and recertification	No	X	X	X	Statewide
	Document imaging	No	X	X	X	Statewide
	Workload management and electronic case records	No	X	X	X	Statewide
	Standard client check-in system	No	X	X	X	Statewide
	Automated Answer Phone system	No	X	X	X	Statewide
	SNAP website benefit estimator	No			X	Statewide
	Linked databases	No			X	Statewide
	Wireless point-of-sale for farmers' markets	No				Statewide
	Narration templates	No	X	X	X	Statewide
	Policy update training tool	No	X	X	X	Statewide
	Operational dashboard	No	X			Statewide
Partnering with Community Organizations	Contracts for outreach partners	No				Statewide
	Application assistance by community partners	No		X		Statewide
	State Nutrition Action Plan	No			X	4 pilot counties
	Reaching the Working Poor SNAP grant	No				Statewide
	Community organizations involved in revising online application	No	X	X	X	Statewide

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Type of Modernization Activity		Waiver Required	Other Programs Affected			Geographic Scope
			TANF	Medicaid	Other	
Policy Changes	Interview scheduling waiver	Yes				Statewide
	CAP	Yes			X	Statewide
	SSI/OASDI change reporting waiver	Yes			X	Statewide
	Removed drug-related felonies as condition of eligibility	No				Statewide
	Simplified reporting	No				Statewide
	Exclusion of child support paid from income	No				Statewide
	Reduced verification of household composition	No				Statewide
	Student employment hours waiver	Yes				Statewide
	Telephone interviews	Yes				Statewide
	Broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE)	Yes	X			Statewide
	Transitional food assistance	No	X			Statewide

Source: Data were collected from interviews with state and local agency officials and community partners, state agency documents and websites, FNS's website and waivers database, and SNAP modernization studies conducted by the Urban Institute and Mathematica.

Timeline for Restructuring of Administrative Functions

- **2009:** SDR/business reengineering piloted. Staff realignment implemented.

- **2010:** Statewide implementation of SDR/business reengineering. Regional and local call centers consolidated into one virtual statewide call center. IVR enhancements deployed in the call center. Two mobile offices established.

Timeline for Expanding Applications of Technology

- **2000:** Online application piloted.

- **2001:** Online application expanded statewide. Document imaging and electronic case records piloted. Document and workload management system implemented. Answer Phone system and linked databases implemented.

- **2003:** Document imaging and electronic case records expanded statewide.

- **2008:** SNAP website benefit estimator established.

- **2009:** New online system website launched. EBT functions added to DMS/Barcode. Wireless POS for farmers' markets implemented. Standard client check-in system and narration templates piloted.

- **2010:** Centralized fax server for improved methods to submit verifications established. Standard client check-in implemented statewide. Narration templates implemented statewide. Standard client check-in system fully implemented statewide.

- **2011:** Operational dashboard deployed. Washington Connection portal for online screening tool, online account information, and online change reporting and recertification implemented. Narration templates implemented statewide. Policy training tool implemented.

Timeline for Partnering with Community Organizations

- **2002:** Contracts with community organizations for outreach partners.

- 2003: State Nutrition Action Plan.

- 2004: Community organizations involved in revising online application.

- 2008: Outreach contracts compensation transitions to performance-based model.

- 2009: Community partners assist with application assistance. Reaching the Working Poor grant received.

Timeline for Policy Changes

- **2001:** WASHCAP waiver approved.

- **2003:** Waiver of face-to-face interview at recertification approved.

- **2004:** Waiver for simplified reporting approved. Drug-related felonies condition of eligibility removed. BBCE implemented.

- **2005:** SSI/OASDI change reporting waiver approved. Transitional food assistance established.

- **2007:** SSI/OASDI change reporting waiver extended on an indefinite basis.

- **2008:** BBCE expanded. Waiver allowing student employment hours to be averaged approved and implemented.

- **2009:** Waiver of face-to-face interview at initial application approved. Waiver for simplified reporting extended to include the elderly and disabled. Child support paid by household excluded from income. Verification of household composition reduced. Interview scheduling waiver rollout begun.

- **2010:** Interview scheduling waiver rollout completed. Waiver to average student hours of employment approved April 1, 2010, on an indefinite basis

- **2011:** Interview scheduling waiver extended to 2013.

Figure H.5.1. Timeline of Modernization Activities, Washington

Modernization Activity	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
SDR/Business Reengineering										▓	▓	▓	▓
Statewide Virtual Call Center with IVR System										▓	▓	▓	▓
Staff Realignment									▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Mobile Offices										▓	▓	▓	▓
Online Application			▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Online Screening Tool												▓	▓
Online Change Reporting and Recertification												▓	▓
Document Imaging and Electronic Case Records			▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Workload Management and Electronic Case Records System			▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Standard Client Check-in System									▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Automated Answer Phone System			▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
SNAP Website Benefit Estimator									▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Linked Databases (Spider system)			▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Wireless POS for Farmers' Markets										▓	▓	▓	▓
Narration Templates										▓	▓	▓	▓
Policy Update Training Tool												▓	▓
Operational Dashboard												▓	▓
Contracts for Outreach Partners		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓

Modernization Activity	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Community Partners Perform Application Assistance										▓	▓	▓	▓
State Nutrition Action Plan				▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Reaching the Working Poor SNAP grant										░	▓	▓	
Community Organizations Involved in Revising Online Application					▓								
Interview Scheduling Waiver										░	▓	▓	▓
Combined Application Project				▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
SSI/OASDI Change Reporting Waiver[a]						▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Removed Drug-related Felonies as Condition of Eligibility					▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Simplified Reporting[b]					▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Exclusion of Child Support Paid from Income										▓	▓	▓	▓
Reduced Verification of Household Composition										▓	▓	▓	▓
Student Employment Hours Waiver									▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Telephone Interviews at Initial Application										▓	▓	▓	▓
Telephone Interviews at Recertification				▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
BBCE[c]					▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓
Transitional Food Assistance						▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓

Initiative in pilot phase or limited implementation.

Initiative in implementation statewide.

How Modernization Profile Was Developed

The Washington modernization profile was compiled using information collected from a variety of sources. Two previous SNAP modernization studies performed on the behalf of USDA's FNS—the first conducted by the Urban Institute and the other by Mathematica—resulted in several reports that provided a firm foundation regarding modernization efforts in Washington. The study team putting together this profile also had access to and made use of the original data collected for the Mathematica-led research study.

The profile also relied on information drawn from extensive reviews of online resources—for example, FNS's website, the FNS waivers database, Washington's SNAP website, local partner websites, and national advocacy group websites. Most significantly, the profile was informed by documents collected directly from DSHS and local community partners, as well as interviews conducted in late 2011 and early 2012 with state and local agency officials and community partners.

Washington provided comments on an early version of the profile in September 2011 and again before publication. When appropriate, we incorporated comments and suggestions to provide clarity and ensure accuracy.

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3. O'Brien, C., P. Holcomb, R. Koralek, J. Parnes, N. Pindus, and G. Rowe. "Enhancing Food Stamp Certification: Food Stamp Modernization Efforts." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, August 2007.

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