

New York City HHS–CONNECT

NEW YORK CITY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS)–CONNECT

SYNOPSIS

ACCESS NYC is an online tool developed by the New York City (NYC) Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, in collaboration with the NYC Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT), that allows users to screen for more than 35 city, state, and federal benefit programs, search for office locations, and create prepopulated application forms.

Building on the success of ACCESS NYC, the NYC Chief Information Officer (CIO) for HHS, under the HHS–Connect program, has begun to implement functionality for New York City residents to apply for benefits online through the same interface. The first online application in production is for the School Meals program. This functionality is dependent on a data exchange between ACCESS NYC and an external system, specifically a third-party vendor the NYC Department of Education uses to process its School Meals paper applications. Although this is the first data exchange to or from ACCESS NYC, the city acknowledges the need for more as additional online applications are built. To satisfy the need for standards and consistency, the city decided to build on the success of the Global Justice XML Data Model (GJXDM) in the Justice domain and adopt NIEM 2.0-conformant data exchanges for ACCESS NYC and the overall Health and Human Services domain.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

The New York City Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT) oversees the city's use of existing and emerging technologies in government operations and its delivery of services to the public. DoITT works to improve the government's efficiency through technology and to make communication with the government straightforward and clear.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CHALLENGE: It is the goal of the NYC Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT) to use a standard data model for common information exchanges. This model should build on national initiatives in other domains, such as the National Information Exchange Model. However, most Health and Human Services (HHS) data lacks standard representation within NIEM 2.0, and the HHS–Connect project strives for developing or contributing to standards on national or local initiatives to ensure alignment with ongoing work in the domain.

SOLUTION: DoITT and the HHS–Connect team developed NIEM 2.0-conformant Information Exchange Package Documentation (IEPD) to use in the exchange of School Meals form data.

RESULTS: The online application program release of ACCESS NYC went live for the 2008–2009 school year. The data exchange effort was improved by the existence of a standard data model.

The Office of the Chief Information Officer for Health and Human Services reports directly to the NYC Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services. This office is responsible for implementing the HHS–Connect Roadmap. The mission of HHS–Connect is to break information silos through the use of modernized technology and coordinated agency practices to more efficiently and effectively provide health and human services to New Yorkers.

CHALLENGE

An overarching theme of the HHS–Connect project is to enable information sharing among disparate NYC agencies.

A challenge seen in many different HHS–Connect projects is ensuring that previous and potential point-to-point data transfers are implemented such that additional agencies could participate with minimal rework. As described below, NIEM made this possible by allowing the same IEPD to be used for the transfer between HHS and the U.S. Department of Education (DOE), as well as between HHS and the Human Resources Administration (HRA).

SOLUTION

Several schemas were generated to extend the NIEM core schemas. The end users of the online School Meals application are ultimately the parents of the eligible children making application to the program. The parents submit household and income information through the Curam-based application, which is then stored in a relational database. A nightly batch job extracts the data from the database and creates a separate XML document, using the NIEM-compliant exchange schema, for each submitted application. The XML documents are encrypted and securely transmitted to the DOE for processing.

RESULTS

An IEPD was generated to allow the data exchange. This went quite smoothly without any major issues. The School Meals online application is available at <http://www.nyc.gov/accessnyc>. The most significant benefit of using NIEM for this process was the creation of “common” NIEM extensions that will be used across HHS–Connect projects. This benefit is being realized as the extensions created for the School Meals IEPD are also being utilized in the HHS–Connect Worker Portal IEPD. In addition, a second request for School Meals data from the HRA is being implemented using the School Meals IEPD.

Another related result of this information sharing initiative is the creation of an internal SharePoint site for discussing any NIEM experiences within NYC government. This will help NYC government agencies share information about the use of NIEM and host lessons learned about NIEM applications from which other government agencies can benefit.

