

Vermont's IE&E System Modernization

VT Integrated Eligibility System (VT-IES) Project

Executive Summary

The Vermont Integrated Eligibility System (VT-IES) Project is a crucial part of the state's effort to modernize its Integrated Eligibility and Enrollment (IE&E) system. The current system faces operational and technical challenges impacting Vermonters and state staff. The VT-IES Project aims to address these issues by implementing a customer-focused integrated eligibility system (IES) through a phased, modular procurement strategy. The new IES will replace legacy systems to optimize eligibility, enrollment, and customer management functionality and is expected to include components related to a Customer Portal, Business Rules Engine, and Case Management.

The new IES will provide Vermonters with a centralized, simplified, and user-friendly experience for applying for and managing benefits. It will ensure secure enrollment, personalized access, streamlined applications, and comprehensive customer service. State staff will benefit from reduced manual work, improved data integrity, and automated processes. The VT-IES project has identified high-level objectives to improve the customer experience and streamline operations, emphasizing centralizing customer data, meeting compliance guidelines, and ensuring financial integrity. The VT-IES project also recognizes the challenges of modernizing an IE&E system and plans to apply modular and incremental development principles to implement an IES that is flexible, interoperable, and extensible while leveraging existing state technology platforms. Integrating the new IES with existing systems and adherence to standards will be crucial. As such, the procurement process will engage experienced vendors capable of implementing complex solutions. The VT-IES project timeline is expected to be three (3) to four (4) years of design, development, and implementation. Still, VT-IES plans for timely and incremental delivery and release of improvements, ensuring a continuous and iterative approach to system enhancements.

The VT-IES Project aligns with the broader IE&E System Modernization effort and aims to simplify benefit application and management for Vermonters, providing a better experience for Vermonters and state staff. It focuses on customer needs, streamlining processes, and leveraging technology while considering integration challenges and compliance requirements.

IE&E Program Overview

Approximately one in three Vermont residents enroll in economic and health care benefits annually. However, the current eligibility and enrollment systems suffer from operational and technical inefficiencies. This results in a fragmented and cumbersome experience for Vermonters and State Staff, highlighting the need for a more streamlined and coordinated process.

Vermonters face challenges during the enrollment process, including the requirement to submit the same information multiple times. Limited data access and coordination across programs when dealing with call centers is an ongoing problem. Additionally, approval timelines are often lengthy, and the information provided could be clearer.

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State staff also encounter difficulties delivering services due to manual and labor-intensive processes. Staff are burdened with memorizing complex rules and procedures, and the existence of customer information in multiple enrollment systems makes it challenging to provide comprehensive customer service. Moreover, the current legacy enrollment systems pose significant risks to the state, as they are isolated and difficult to maintain, and updating them is costly. Additionally, there is a shortage of staff available to handle the maintenance of these systems effectively. These factors underscore the need for a more efficient IES in Vermont.

IE&E System Modernization

The State of Vermont recognizes the importance of modernizing its IE&E system to ensure it can support its residents and protect the most vulnerable. Ongoing modernization efforts are necessary to ensure compliance with federal and state regulations, including federal reporting, HIPAA compliance, and meeting technical requirements set by the State Legislature and our federal partners, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS).

To address the operational and technical inefficiencies, the VT-IES Project aims to modernize eligibility and enrollment functionality by implementing a customer-focused integrated eligibility system (IES) using a phased and modular procurement strategy. The new IES is expected to consist of three core components:

- **Customer Portal:** The Customer Portal will be the primary interface for Vermonters to access and manage their eligibility information and benefits. It will provide a user-friendly platform that allows individuals to apply for various economic and healthcare programs, check the status of their applications, and make updates to their information.
- **Case Management:** The Case Management component will be a comprehensive system that State Staff can use to process and manage eligibility determinations for applicants. It will streamline the application process, improve communication between staff and applicants, and help ensure that eligible individuals promptly receive the benefits they are entitled to.
- **Business Rules Engine:** The Rules Engine will incorporate the complex eligibility rules and criteria for the different programs. This engine will automate the eligibility determination process, making it more efficient and accurate, reducing the possibility of errors, and ensuring fair and consistent outcomes for applicants.

While these three components represent core elements of the new IES, a vendor's proposed solution is expected to include additional functionality as needed to support the successful implementation and operation of the Customer Portal, Case Management, and Rules Engine. Additional features might involve reporting capabilities to generate relevant data and insights, finance modules to manage program budgets and payments, interfaces to integrate with other existing systems, and correspondence tools to facilitate communication with applicants and beneficiaries.

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A phased and modular procurement strategy will be used, which allows the VT-IES solution to be developed and implemented incrementally, reducing the risks associated with large-scale system overhauls and enabling the State to adapt and make improvements as needed during the project's lifecycle. The goal of the VT-IES Project is to create a more efficient, user-friendly, and reliable integrated eligibility system that benefits Vermonters and State staff, ensuring that eligible individuals can access the services and benefits they need in a timely and accurate manner.

VT-IES Vision & Goals

Vermont envisions a future where eligible Vermont residents have a straightforward and convenient method to apply for, access, and manage their health care and economic assistance benefits. The VT-IES Project aims to enhance the customer experience for both Vermonters and State staff by focusing on achieving the following top three outcomes:

Simplified and Streamlined Application Process: The VT-IES Project seeks to create a more user-friendly and efficient application process, reducing the need to submit redundant information and navigate numerous systems. This outcome aims to make it easier for individuals to apply for multiple benefits, resulting in a more cohesive and coordinated enrollment process.

Seamless Access to Benefits: The project aims to ensure that eligible Vermonters can easily gain access to the health care and economic assistance benefits they need without facing unnecessary hurdles. By implementing the new IES and its functional modules, individuals will have a centralized access point that enables them to manage their enrollment. This outcome aims to reduce confusion and provide a more user-centric approach to benefit access.

Improved Efficiency and Effectiveness for State Staff: The VT-IES Project recognizes the challenges faced by State Staff in delivering services to Vermonters. By implementing a modernized system with a customer portal, case management capabilities, and a rules engine, the project aims to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of State Staff in managing eligibility and enrollment processes. This outcome aims to reduce manual and labor-intensive tasks, enable better coordination across programs, increase data quality, and simplify procedures for State Staff, improving their ability to serve Vermonters.

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VT-IES Objectives

The VT-IES Project has established high-level objectives to guide its actions and measure progress toward achieving the project goals for Vermonters and State Staff. These objectives are as follows:

For Vermonters:

1. Anonymous eligibility prescreening through a web-based source.
2. Simplify benefits application and maintenance during changes and life events.
3. Ensure secure and accessible enrollment for various benefit programs.
4. Create an inclusive online application accessible through multiple channels.
5. Develop a streamlined eligibility process for health and economic benefits.
6. Address barriers and enhance support for diverse user needs.
7. Simplify program selection, payments, and assistance.
8. Implement auto-renewal through self-service portals for certain programs.
9. Deliver timely and clear notices in preferred languages.

For State Staff:

1. Streamline enrollment, enabling Staff to focus on complex cases.
2. Use automation for daily functions and notifications.
3. Access an online learning platform for system updates and process efficiency.
4. Improve data integrity with automated enrollment processes.
5. Allow Staff to review customer cases intuitively and with ease.

For the new IES:

1. Consolidate health and economic benefits data.
2. Enhance functionality while aligning with fiscal resources.
3. Provide accurate and timely benefit determination and notification.
4. Establish a robust data management solution.
5. Design for flexibility and emergency needs.
6. Ensure financial integrity and compliance.
7. Reuse existing technology platforms where possible.

These high-level objectives provide a roadmap for the VT-IES Project, outlining specific actions and measurable steps needed to achieve the project's goals of improving the experience for Vermonters and State Staff and modernizing the IES in Vermont.

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VT-IES Scope

The VT-IES Project will seek to centralize eligibility and enrollment functionality for Qualified Health Plans (QHP), Medicaid coverage, and economic benefit programs. Table 1 outlines the high-level in-scope programs for VT-IES, the two primary systems used for eligibility determination and enrollment, ACCESS (A Centralized Computer Eligibility Service System) and VHC (Vermont Health Connect), and the summary counts for each program as of June 2023. This program list is subject to change.

Table 1: Supported High-Level Programs, Source Systems & Summary Counts

Supported High-Level Programs*	Source System**	Summary Counts***
Medicaid (total for all programs)	VHC-System & ACCESS	170,461
Medicaid for the Aged Blind, and Disabled (MABD)	ACCESS	29,359
Medicaid for Children and Adults (MCA)	VHC-System	141,102
Including Dr. Dynasaur	VHC-System	4,535
Pharmacy Programs (VPharm & Healthy Vermonters)	ACCESS	10,496
Medicare Savings Programs (MSP)	ACCESS	14,460
Qualified Health Plans (QHP)	VHC-System	24,150
Premium assistance (VPA, APTC)		
Cost-sharing assistance (VCSR, CSR)		
3SquaresVT (SNAP)	ACCESS	68,485
Fuel Assistance (LIHEAP)	ACCESS	4,405
Reach Up (Including TANF)	ACCESS	9,751
General Assistance (GA) / Emergency Assistance (EA)	ACCESS	1,961
Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA)	ACCESS	3
<p>* Expected data retention for all programs listed is at least ten years in varying states of completion and accuracy. ** ACCESS supports additional State Programs and services outside of IE&E. *** Counts, as of June 2023, are individual and per program; cumulative counts can include duplicates.</p>		

The IE&E Program requires a solution that can meet the IE&E requirements for all in-scope programs, support existing state and federal program requirements and mandates, and be extensible to incorporate future changes by the state or its federal partners.

VT-IES Procurement Approach

The VT-IES Project has adopted a procurement strategy to implement a customer-focused Integrated Eligibility and Enrollment system consisting of a Customer Portal, Case Management, and a Rules Engine. The primary objective of this strategy is to enhance the customer experience for Vermonters and State Staff. While the Request for Proposal (RFP) will describe the IES, the IE&E Program acknowledges that the vendor's proposed solution may include additional required functionality (reporting, interfaces, financial management, correspondence) to support the implementation of their core system. The bidder response format will allow vendors to present their overall proposed solutions while also recommending any additional functionalities or capabilities their solution can offer through configuration or customization.

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Recognizing the complexities of modernizing an IE&E system, Vermont intends to engage a single vendor with experience implementing complex solutions within state governments. The VT-IES RFP will outline mandatory vendor qualifications, with a requirement that the vendor (Prime only, with or without the engagement of sub-vendors) must have prior experience with engagements of similar size, complexity, and scope to this procurement.

The VT-IES project team has developed business and stakeholder requirements in a user story format to describe desired end goals. Following the International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA) and State of Vermont (SoV) Agency of Digital Services (ADS) Enterprise Project Management Office (EPMO) recommendation, this approach, considered a "user experience requirement" by the state, enables a formal description without specifying how the VT-IES solution will achieve it. Solution requirements will be developed further with the chosen vendor, while the dependencies and traceability process in user story format will be maintained.

The design, development, and implementation (DDI) costs related to modernizing the State's IE&E systems across the benefiting programs will be split between CMS, FNS, and the state as determined by Vermont's Cost Allocation Methodology (CAM). The VT-IES RFP will provide details outlining vendor expectations to track and report DDI hours specific to the IES functions outlined in Vermont's CAM, as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: IE&E Module/Sub-Modules per Vermont's CAM



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Validating Vermont's System Modernization Approach

Vermont has engaged with other states and conducted three Requests for Information (RFI) between November 2022 and April 2023. These RFIs were aimed at soliciting feedback from the vendor community regarding Vermont's IE&E System Modernization procurement approach. The feedback received during this outreach process confirmed that Vermont's procurement approach involved implementing an IE&E system with an estimated implementation timeframe of three (3) to four (4) years. The feedback from other states highlighted the common challenges of system modernization with limited resources. Recognizing the importance of securing the resources needed for successful modernization efforts, Vermont confirmed that a broad range of prime vendors would qualify to bid on the VT-IES procurement. This approach increases the likelihood of attracting vendors who can provide the required resources and expertise to support the IE&E Program's modernization goals.

To further support the planning and procurement efforts of the IE&E Program, Vermont has engaged the procurement advisory services of [NTT DATA](#). NTT DATA has contributed its expertise and guidance to assist Vermont in effectively navigating the complexities of the project and ensuring a well-informed and successful VT-IES procurement process.

Implementation Approach

The State expects to collaborate with the selected Vendor to determine the most suitable implementation approach for the VT-IES solution. This collaboration will consider factors such as legacy system constraints, mandated technologies, leveraging enterprise services, program sequencing, and prior modernization efforts. By considering these variables, the collaboration aims to address the challenges and opportunities specific to the State.

In response to the VT-IES RFP, vendors will be expected to demonstrate an approach and solution that is flexible, robust, and interoperable, meeting the specific needs of the VT-IES Project. The proposed solution must align with Vermont's vision of providing its population with customer-focused access and service experience. Additionally, the vendor must outline a plan for timely and incremental delivery and release of improvements, ensuring a continuous and iterative approach to system enhancements. The proposed solution is expected to align with the state's enterprise approach to technology for the IE&E program, ensuring consistency and integration within the broader technology landscape.

The IE&E Program expects vendor bid submissions to outline their proposed implementation approach and schedule, considering federal expectations for piloting new systems in limited production environments. This consideration reflects the need for a well-planned and phased approach to system implementation, ensuring the successful adoption and integration of the new system while minimizing risks.

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Integration Approach

The VT-IES procurement is being built to eliminate dependencies on existing legacy systems. However, data integrations to legacy functionality or programs not yet modernized or not in the scope of this effort will be required throughout this modernization effort. This degree of integration with the legacy system(s) will depend on the functionality supplied by the module/component being implemented, the dependencies of the functionality that remains in the legacy system as well as other IE&E programs dependent on the data or outcomes of the implemented module or component(s). It is also acknowledged that there will likely be changes to legacy processes or systems to support Federal and State mandates or policy changes while the DDI of the new system is underway. These changes may require integration into programs outside the scope of this IE&E effort. Vermont's desire to implement the new system independent of the legacy systems will help ensure these systems remain intact.

Technical Approach

The approach to DDI will follow the CMS and FNS standards for modularity, which requires encapsulated functionality that, by its nature, allows the swap of a function/module without affecting the whole system. Modules will adhere to the Medicaid Information Technology Architecture (MITA) 3.0's framework requirements – Technical, Business, Information, and Data Architectures. The state intends to apply hybrid agile principles and user-centered design in the planning and implementation of these modules.

Vermont recognizes that FNS's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) process flows that fall outside the MITA 3.0 framework (e.g., minimum application filing requirements, no system-determined automatic eligibility or redetermination) will need to be identified and developed. Business process improvements will be designed and implemented with the release of new technical capabilities to ensure stakeholders can realize the intended business benefits as IE&E system capabilities become available.

The state's technical vision for IE&E includes the following:

- Modular and incremental modernization of system functionality.
- Building seamless, configurable, interoperable, extensible, and maintainable systems.
- A preference to reuse and/or interface with existing State technology platforms where possible but open to alternatives with justification.
- Leverage open standards with "low code" and highly configurable modular development.

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Core Technologies

The State of Vermont has identified several core technologies it expects the Vendor's solution to integrate with to support end-to-end integration between their solution and Vermont's enterprise technology architecture for the respective functionalities:

- Hyland OnBase for Enterprise Content Management (ECM) and document storage.
- Salesforce MuleSoft for data and application integration.
- Okta for external user Identify Access Management (IAM) and Single Sign On (SSO), and
- Verato for Master Person Index.
- (Current Project: Solution to be Determined) for Customer Communications Management System (CCMS)

The extent of integration with the legacy system(s) will depend on the specific functionality provided by the module or component being implemented, as well as the dependencies between the functionality remaining in the legacy system and other IE&E programs that rely on the data or outcomes of the implemented module or component(s).

Timeline & Dependencies

Vermont submitted the VT-IES RFP for CMS/FNS review in September 2023, received feedback, and resubmitted a draft RFP for federal review in February 2024. Vermont anticipates posting the RFP for bid in August 2024. The subsequent DDI period is expected to span three (3) to four (4) once a vendor contract has been executed. The timeline is subject to contract approval from CMS and FNS, as well as state and federal funding approval. The successful implementation of the VT-IES project relies on the state's procurement process and project management practices. These practices will ensure the effective execution of the proposed modular development approach, allowing for the incremental delivery of functionality and the seamless integration of modules. Additionally, the VT-IES Project is subject to mandated Federal and State laws, regulations, and policies related to security, privacy, disaster recovery, and system technology. Compliance with these regulations is crucial to safeguarding data, ensuring privacy, and maintaining the integrity and availability of the system.

In Closing

The VT-IES Project is an integral component of IE&E System Modernization and will work with other initiatives to simplify the process of applying for and managing health care and economic services benefits for Vermonters. This document is for informational purposes only and is subject to change. The IE&E Program is committed to ongoing engagement with other states and the vendor community. Future outreach or solicitation of an RFI does not commit the IE&E Program or the State of Vermont to award a contract.