

Testimony
Information Technology Committee
October 14, 2010
North Dakota Department of Health

Good morning, Chairman Robinson and members of the Information Technology Committee. My name is Kirby Kruger, and I am the director of the Division of Disease Control and the state epidemiologist for the North Dakota Department of Health. I am here today to provide an update on the Department of Health's electronic disease reporting system, Maven, as of October 7, 2010.

The Maven system became operational January 1, 2010, with all but four of the components functioning. The product has performed to our expectations with no major deviations and only minor surprises so far.

One of the four components not operational on January 1, 2010, was completed on October 1, 2010. This component allows us to bring historical data into the Maven system.

The following three components are pending completion but are not critical to our day-to-day operations:

1. One component allows us to package our disease data and send it to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the format the agency requires. CDC has made its comments, the vendor has made changes and a test file has been sent to CDC for further review.
2. The second component allows us to move our historical sexually transmitted disease (STD) data into our new Maven system. This is a one-time conversion that has been run in production; however, we will need to run it again, as we were missing some data from one of the field offices.
3. The final component allows us to send STD data to the CDC in the format the agency requires. A test file was sent to CDC, CDC has made comments, and the contractor has made changes to the extract based on the CDC comments. We are preparing another test file to send to CDC.

The project is on budget, and the scope of the project has not changed since we started. The project has taken longer than expected, however. We had hoped the project would become operational in October 2009, but we missed that mark by three months. We knew that the four components that are pending would take more time and be more complicated.

Some of the lessons learned in the process include:

1. We underestimated the project timeline. A certified project manager may have been able to help determine realistic timelines.
2. We did not have enough depth in our staff when the project started. At the beginning, only one person on our staff had working knowledge of the system and how to configure it. When she left early in the project, several people in the office became involved to create more depth. However, this process took a lot of time.
3. In the future, we plan to include a dedicated project manager in any large IT projects.
4. Finally, a lesson we learned from previous experience with a different software developer was applied to this project; that is, don't rush and compromise the product just to meet established timelines.

I would like to comment on the vendor we have been working with, Consilience Software. The people we have worked with have been very responsive and very open to our suggestions for improvements, and they continue to work hard to bring this project to completion. This is vastly different from our previous experiences with another vendor.

We are hoping to have all components operational by December 31, 2010.

This concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.