

Position Statement

For 2024 Session

MACSSA has an organizational priority of “Strategic Position Development” with the goal of addressing challenges and leading innovation through thoughtful analysis that incorporates fiscal implications, systemic policy concerns, and legislative strategies in the development of policy and legislative positions.

Resource the County Side of HS Modernization Technology

Proposal

Issue:

MACSSA recognizes that not every county has equal ability to invest in what is currently needed at the local level to interface appropriately with state human services systems. A growing concern is an expansion of a digital divide between large vs small county access to tools and local infrastructure solutions (technology, systems, and software) to best meet the needs of consumers and end users. Not all individual counties may not have the resources to develop these solutions alone, but if the state allocated counties flexible technology resources for collaborative projects, more counties can have a voice in innovations and investments that prioritize county needs and perspectives. Working together, we know that counties develop innovative solutions that are informed by workers and end users that meet their local needs.

Ongoing, future investments in Minnesota Human Services system transformation should include and recognize counties and staff time and money needed to implement new state investments by setting aside a percentage of any human services service delivery transformation allocations to offset county related implementation costs. The structure of these funds can be modeled off how state fiscal notes consider agency implementation and administrative costs and systems costs for new appropriation and policy fiscal notes. Counties are committed to working with DHS to determine a formula to distribute grant funds in an equitable manner to each county.

Equally, MACSSA seeks county grants for innovation funds around information technology modernization and innovation projects. Eligible projects would focus on county development of information technology modernization to interface with legacy information technology systems within DHS and collaborative information technology innovation between larger and smaller counties. These projects should be governed collaboratively by counties, with further exploration needed into appropriate fiscal agents and governance that could include Minnesota Counties Computer Cooperative and their existing ability to pool county resources for joint projects.

Implementation:

MACSSA advocates for major financial investment in systems transformation, including state/county/tribal technology modernization and administrative simplification. However, the legislature and the administration must also recognize the importance of county level, property tax payer investments in our system - and the limitations of relying solely on property tax levy capacity to develop and support necessary local infrastructure to interface with state systems. MACSSA asks the legislature to fund both local human services system transformation implementation dollars and flexible county innovation dollars, and DHS to work with counties to maximize these funds by facilitating federal matching funds for eligible expenditures.

MACSSA supports investments that:

- Allocate a portion of state transformation funds and enhanced federal funding to local human services county system transformation innovation efforts

- Allocate a portion of state transformation funds for county implementation of new state-provided technologies and system transformation

Systemic Priority/Paradigm Trend Alignment
 (highlight all that apply and explain why)

- **Equity:** Promote racial equity and eliminate racial disparities in the human services system for all people across the state. *(systemic priority)*
- **Workforce:** Advocate for strategies to sustain and equip the workforce, and simplify work given the forecasted labor shortages. *(systemic priority/paradigm trend)*
- **Technology:** Collaboratively seek state investment in systems transformation and modernization which must include appropriate county collaboration, oversight, and guidance. *(systemic priority/paradigm trend)*
- **Governance/Partnerships:** Co-create state/county governance that results in clear accountability, appropriate allocation of resources, stabilized service delivery, and improved outcomes for people served. *(systemic priority/paradigm trend)*
- **Resident Service:** Adapt to individual needs to support real choices *(paradigm trend)*

The strategic plan and the recent Gartner report validates the concept of a human services practice and technology ecosystem that extend beyond DHS and MNIT supported programs and technologies. We acknowledge the role the state, counties, tribes, and partners have in developing and resourcing Minnesota’s human services practice and technology ecosystem. It encourages blended fiscal solutions that promote appropriate and shared accountability for the system and its outcomes.

MACSSA believes that counties, tribes, and DHS should continue operationalizing effective solutions. There is real value in increasing equity and ease of access to services to all Minnesotans. County agencies are innovating and allocating funding along with staff resources to create operational solutions and there is concern of further fragmentation due to lack of interoperability between county agencies and potential state government systems. DHS and counties need to find ways to innovate together. These principles, including the focus on interoperability, align with the recent final deliverable from the Gartner Curam Assessment project and its updated implementation roadmap for Modernization.

Operational Priority (Committee) Alignment
 (highlight all that apply and explain why)

Adult Services
Behavioral Health

Children’s Services
Equity

Healthcare
Modernization

Policy
Self-Sufficiency

Why:

The Modernization committee was formed for the express purpose of advancing MACSSA’s interests in this topic area. Its membership includes the people who represent MACSSA on DHS modernization governance groups. We also recognize that modernization and system transformation can not, and should not, be divorced from the expertise and experience of MACSSA’s operational priority and policy areas across our human services system.

Rationale/Background:

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 Modernization of human services programs, processes, and technology is imperative to effectiveness and sustainability of publicly funded human services. The current system is complex, fragmented, administratively burdensome for all, and doesn’t produce the outcomes Minnesotans need from these critical community supports. DHS/MNIT provides the major systems (MAXIS, METS, MMIS, MEC², PRISM, SSIS, MnCHOICES, SMI) that county workers use every day to deliver services to residents. These mission-critical systems capture data, automate complex program policies, and provide functionality to support human services administration. Modernization efforts at the state level in recent years have not kept pace with the rapidly changing technology and service environment. MACSSA advocates for major financial investment in systems

transformation, including state/county/tribal technology modernization and administrative simplification, as well changes to governance of strategic/long term investments and day to day system prioritization.

Limitations in the DHS technology budget have constrained the state's ability to respond to the demand counties have for improved technology systems and have inhibited its ability to implement the Gartner recommendations and roadmap. The 2023 legislative session saw historic investment in system transformation funds, with DHS receiving over \$200 million in one time investment. However, this investment is just the tip of the iceberg regarding investments needed and sufficient long-term or ongoing system transformation and technology infrastructure investment spending were not a part of that legislative package.

Importantly, counties did not receive any investments last session toward county costs of system transformation - particularly towards the local costs of implementing these state investments. DHS leadership has renewed its commitment to service and systems transformation and has expressed a desire to respond more directly and effectively to the technology needs of counties and the people we serve. DHS and MNIT, however, have not had the financial resources needed to pull down federal matching funds and truly invest in the solutions counties are demanding. Counties pay for a significant amount of the technology and data systems that are needed to make our Human Services System work. It also costs counties and staff time and money to implement new state investments. In addition, counties have not yet been able to maximize their current local investments by drawing down federal matching APD funds to expand and leverage local property tax dollar investments for eligible systems expenditures. Processes through DHS/MNIT need to be developed to ensure these local investments can be matched and maximized.

Individual counties may not have the resources to develop these solutions alone, but if the state allocated counties flexible technology resources for collaborative projects, a collaborative group of counties would be able to develop solutions that prioritize the county needs and perspectives - and particularly facilitate smaller counties participation in modernization investment without impacting their ability to deliver services that are uniquely smaller in volume. Decentralizing systems transformation resources by facilitating development of local solutions amongst counties has the opportunity to elevate local perspectives and priorities and to develop and highlight innovations that could be pilots for broader investment and implementation across the state. It could help facilitate a culture change and a power dynamic change in how state leaders view our system modernization process, bringing forward the themes from the MACSSA Technology EcoSystem Recommendations with resources for counties to move forward projects and priorities in collaboration with DHS and MNIT, but not run through the current EAB and technology governance structure.

High-level, one paragraph description of the issue and its importance:

MACSSA asks the legislature to allocate a portion of state transformation funds and enhanced federal funding to local county innovation efforts and for implementation of new state-provided technologies. Counties pay for a significant amount of the technology and data systems that are needed to make our Human Services System work. It costs counties and staff time and money to implement new state investments. Individual counties may not have the resources to develop system modernization solutions alone, but if the state allocated counties flexible technology resources for collaborative projects, they would be able to develop solutions that prioritize the county needs and perspectives. Counties should be able to leverage federal funds, similar to how state IT is able draw down significant matches.



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Approved on: