



# Facing the Future with Enterprise Software For Community Service Programs

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Enterprise Software (ES) has been key to business success throughout the world for a number of years. It enables organizations to manage their enterprise as a whole. ES integrates all core business processes in a single IT platform: storing, managing, communicating, and interpreting all of its data. ES presents a comprehensive view of real-time data accessed across the organization. ES reduces expenses, improves customer service, and provides the ability to respond to change.

Originally designed for large enterprises, ES is now used by organizations of varying sizes and missions. Some examples include school systems, government agencies, health care organizations, and university systems. Similarly, ES can provide valuable benefits to the Community Service Program (CSP) network tasked with managing and tracking various interconnected programs, business processes and information.

## Community Service Programs

The CSP network is a collection of State and Community Action Agencies (CAAs), who administer and manage programs such as LIHEAP, Weatherization, Head Start, Non-emergency Medical Transportation, CSBG and others for the benefit of the poor. Funding for these programs is provided by federal and state agencies, utilities, and others.

CSP managers are facing increased demands for accountability, efficiency, integrity and a range of yet unforeseen changing priorities. Agencies unfortunately use a blend of disconnected systems to manage these programs. Meeting these demands with multiple obsolete systems that do not communicate is highly inefficient and in many cases impossible to achieve without a costly restructuring. The following quote illustrates the current situation where agencies manage multiple programs with a range of obsolete systems:

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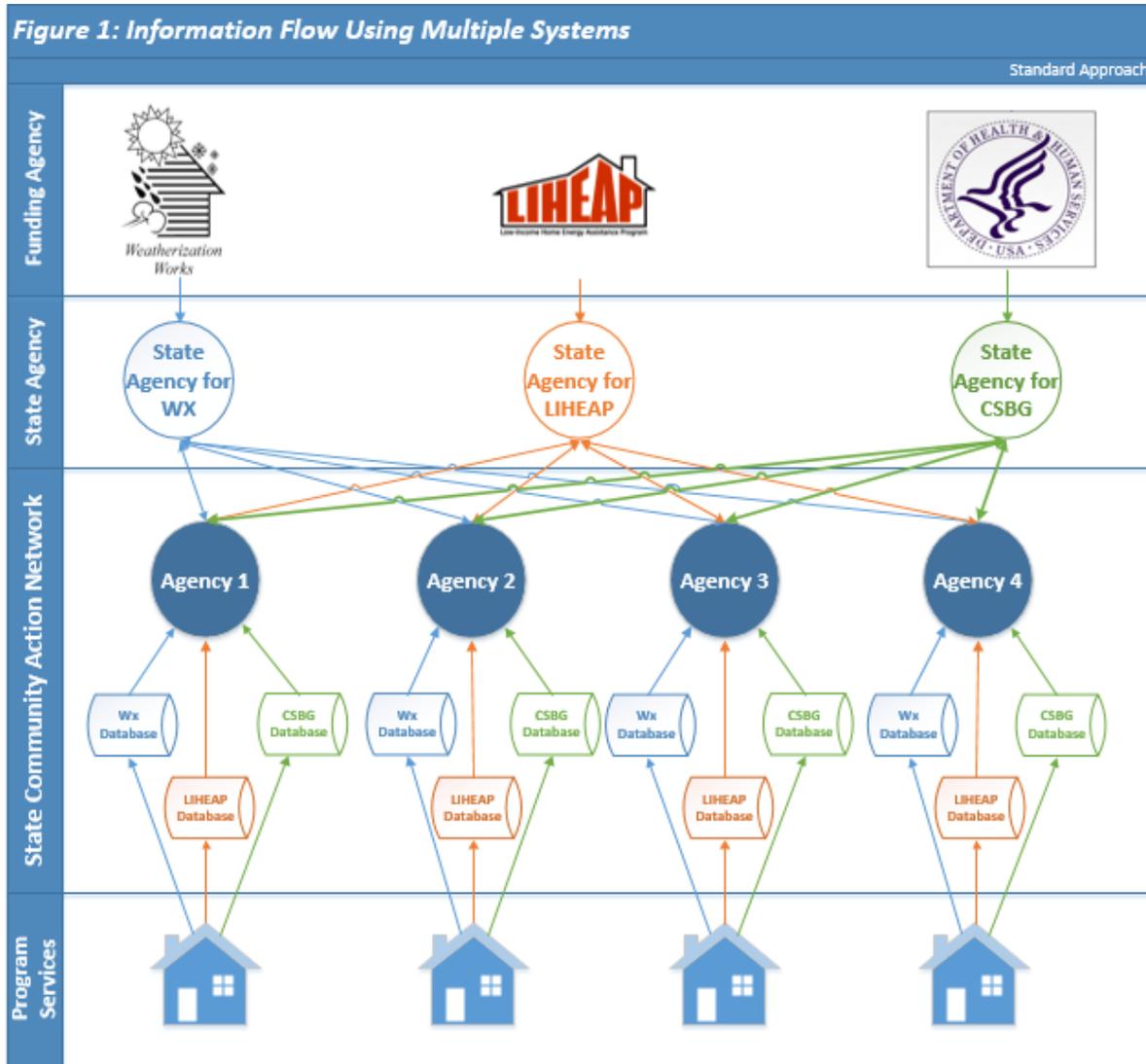
*The members of the pilot project identified that there are 13 program information systems used by Missouri CAAs to track and measure program performance. The problem is not a shortage of performance management systems but a problem of having too many. Most of the program systems do not communicate with one another, making it difficult to utilize these systems to evaluate agency level impact on poverty.*

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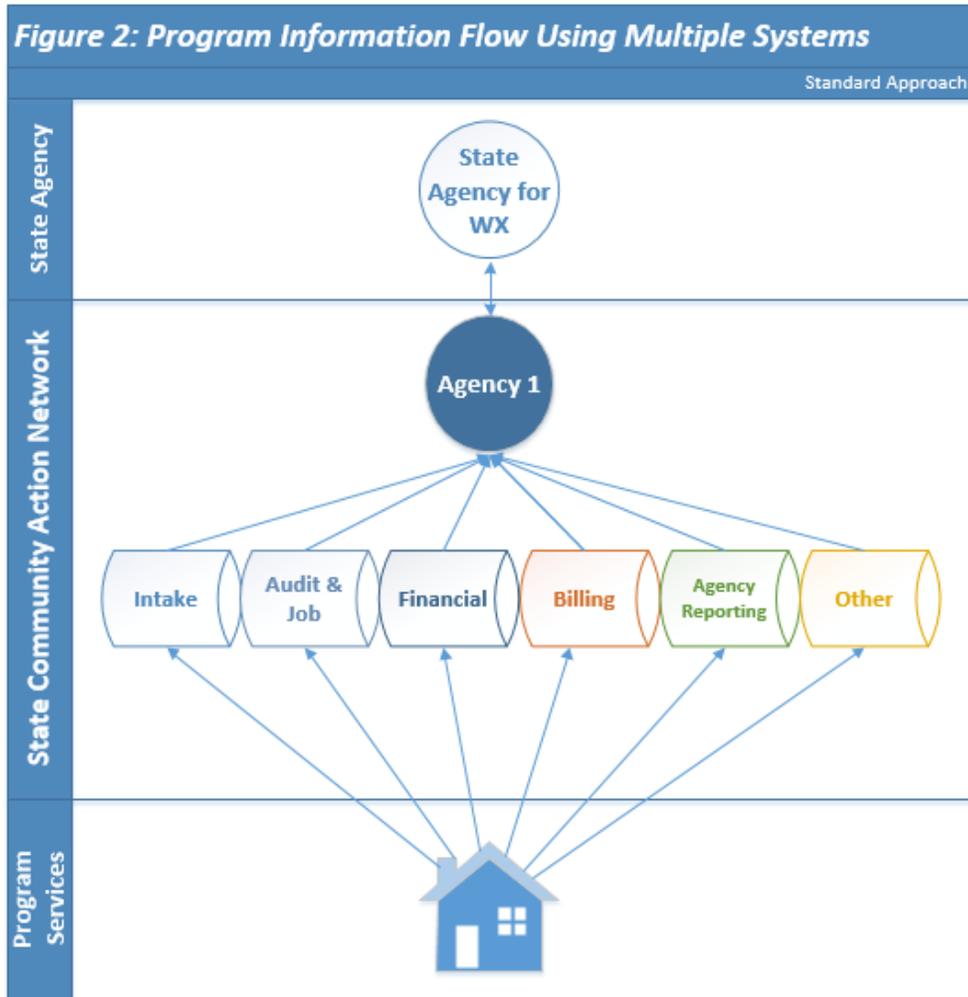
<sup>1</sup>Bundled Services, Delivery Case Study, 2014, p. 10 by the NASCSP ROMA Center under grant #90ET0435 from the U.S. DHHS

## Challenges with Multiple Systems

Figure 1 illustrates the flow of information using separate information systems to manage each program. The same client data is entered into multiple databases that do not communicate with one another. This creates duplicate data entries and associated problems.



Not only do agencies manage individual programs with separate systems, but many agencies actually use several systems and databases to manage one single CSP. Figure 2 illustrates the inefficiencies of program delivery for the Weatherization Program using several systems for the core business processes; separate databases, spreadsheets and even paper documents are used to manage intake, energy audit, job management, financial, billing, reporting and others.



#### Multiple Information Systems Drawbacks:

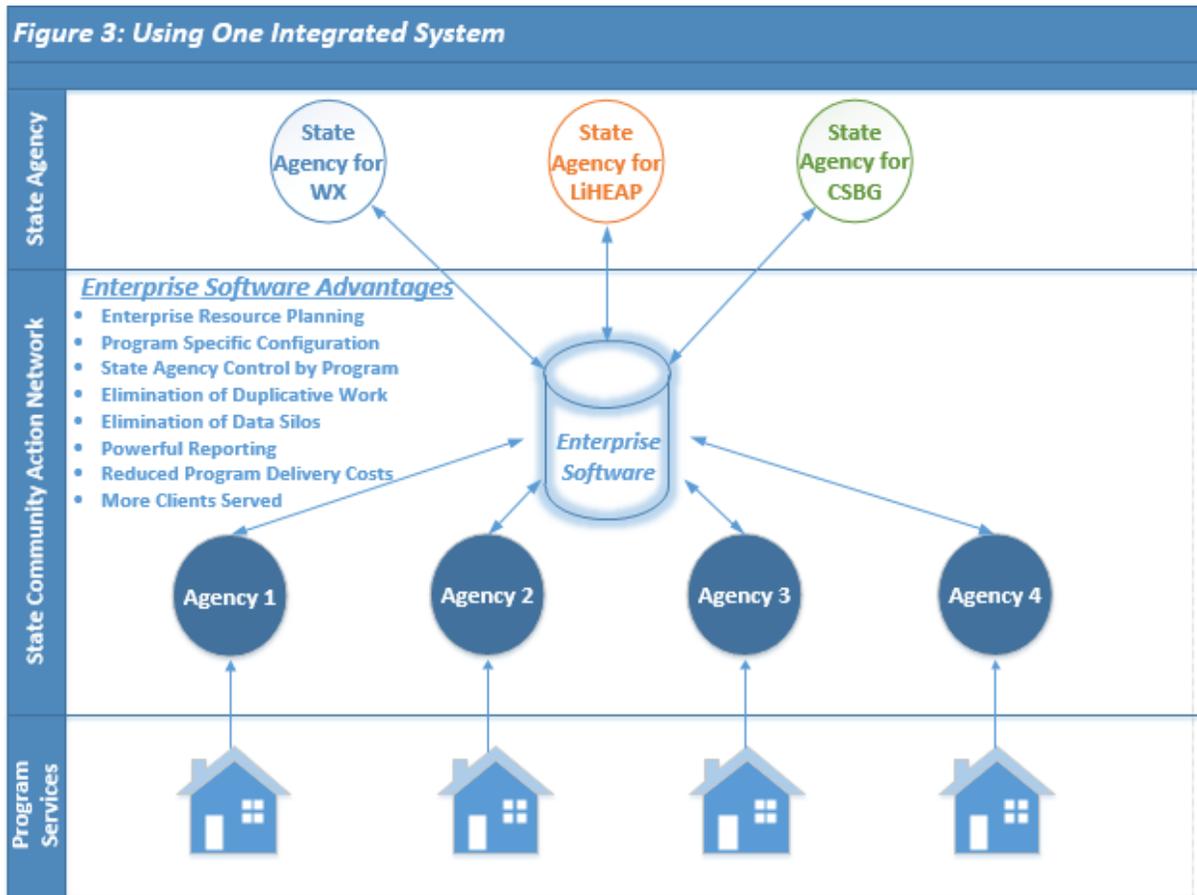
- ✓ Difficulty in managing the agency as an integrated enterprise
- ✓ Difficulty in managing a single program as an integrated enterprise
- ✓ Difficulty in reporting agency and program performance
- ✓ Challenge of program compliance and integrity
- ✓ Wasted staff time from duplication of effort
- ✓ Increased potential for errors
- ✓ Difficulty in compiling and reconciling information
- ✓ Wasted effort to learn multiple systems
- ✓ Increased Costs to maintain and modify multiple systems

#### Advantages of Enterprise Software

ES eliminates the need for multiple information management systems thus reducing costs and potential problems. Figure 3 illustrates how Enterprise Software (ES) can streamline program delivery by integrating all core business processes and databases for multiple programs into one single IT platform.



The result is a streamlined, cost-effective business model. The integration and simplicity of information flow in Figure 3 is in stark contrast with the duplication of effort and data reflected in Figures 1 and 2.



### Agency Level Enterprise Software

Agency level ES provides a comprehensive and integrated view of the agency as a whole, not compartmentalized by program or information management system. It displays, manages and stores all data on a single platform as illustrated in Figure 4. Enterprise Software can be implemented at the state level, the individual CAA-agency level or the program level.

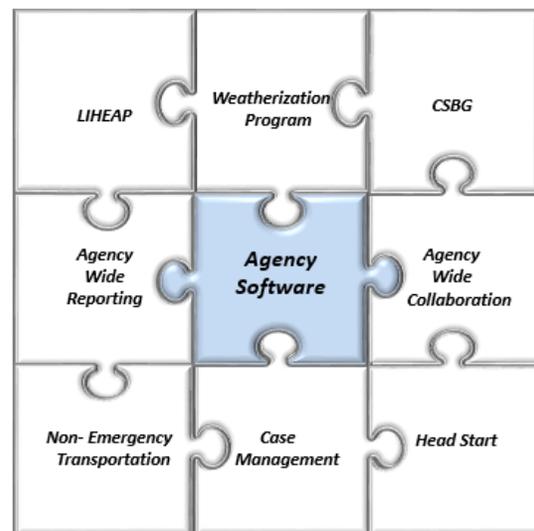


Figure 4: Agency Level Enterprise Software



### Program Level Enterprise Software

Program level ES integrates all core business processes of each specific program, resulting in a comprehensive view and access to all core data, processes, and functions. Figure 5 represents an example of how a Weatherization ES joins together financial management, administration, intake, analytics, grant management, energy audit/job management, and document storage in one system.

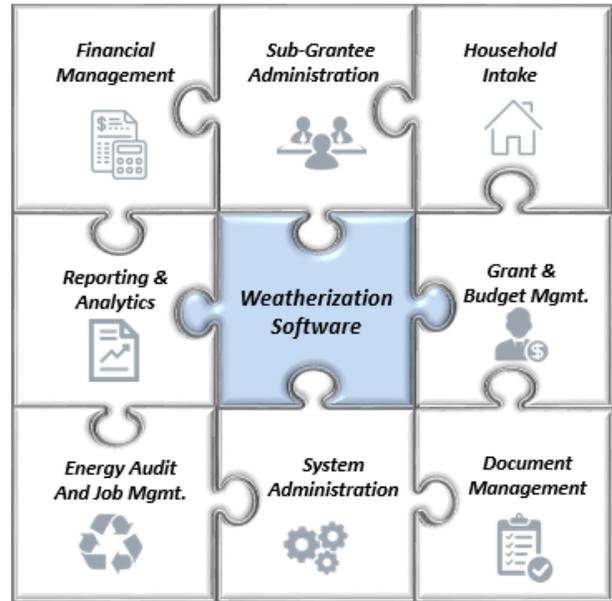


Figure 5: Program Level Enterprise Software

Summary of Enterprise Software Benefits	State Agency	Regional Agency	Clients
Improved quality and efficient delivery of services	✓	✓	✓
Consistent and standardized delivery of services	✓	✓	✓
Real-time, state and agency access to information/data	✓	✓	
Maintains state and agency level access/control	✓	✓	
Powerful Analytics and Performance Measurement	✓	✓	
Powerful reporting with required state & federal reports	✓	✓	
Transparent and consistent household data	✓	✓	✓
Efficient and effective program compliance	✓	✓	✓
Elimination of data synchronization between systems	✓	✓	✓
Reduced IT costs	✓	✓	
Reduced staff time for duplicate data entry	✓	✓	
Adaptable to changing priorities	✓	✓	✓
Efficient delivery of bundled services	✓	✓	✓
More households served	✓	✓	✓
Support in creating State Plans	✓	✓	
Support in preparing grant applications	✓	✓	



## Selecting the correct Enterprise Software Solution

Business philosophy and competency of the Service Provider is equally important as the software platform when selecting an ES Solution. The following criteria should guide your selection of an appropriate ES Solution for your agency:

- ✓ **Service Provider:** Your service provider should offer proven IT skills combined with knowledge and experience of CSPs. The provider should establish trust and be committed to your success through a common partnership, and not a simple software purchase.
- ✓ **Support Staff:** Support from staff fully familiar with CSPs will result in more informed and responsive assistance.
- ✓ **Implementation and Training:** should be tailored to your agency and individual program needs. Disruption during implementation should be minimized based on a carefully developed and mutually agreed-upon Training and Implementation Plan.
- ✓ **Comprehensive and Integrated Platform:** The ES should incorporate all the core business processes of each program and enterprise. ES should fully integrate all administrative, financial and operational functions at both the program and agency levels.
- ✓ **Agile:** ES systems must be easily configurable to adapt to changing program rules, regulations and agency-specific requirements and needs. The ES should have a flexible architecture that can be efficiently modified in response to changing priorities.
- ✓ **Data Analytics:** ES should combine transactional and analytical systems to measure program and enterprise/agency performance through powerful, uniform reporting for all programs and clients.
- ✓ **Collaboration:** The ES should provide a platform for collaboration. Users should have access to features within the application according to their role in the enterprise. The system should provide for internal communication and notifications.
- ✓ **Interoperability:** The ES should provide for efficient data transfer through a data exchange utility or live interface depending on program or agency specific requirements.
- ✓ **Essential Characteristics:** Security, performance, scalability, and robustness should each be carefully evaluated.