Medicaid Project Management

You think Medicaid projects are just another project?
Well, did you consider…

Overview: This white paper is written by netlogx, an Information Risk Management Company, to raise awareness of some of the special areas to consider and account for when managing Medicaid related projects.

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Introduction

In the world of project management, some will argue a good project manager can successfully run a project whether or not they have a background in that industry. The theory is that as long as the project manager follows project management best practices all should be well. However, in the world of Medicaid project management there are some additional factors to consider to be successful. Medicaid project management can be a very high profile, politically controversial area to manage. The impact to the general population of Medicaid projects means a good project manager needs to consider some additional factors not found in your standard Project Management 101 book. Lesson learned - the ability to navigate this high profile environment does not always follow a standard set of project management rules and processes.

The problem

Project delivery in the Medicaid spaces involves many different areas

The Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) creates regulations that have a downstream impact on a given states own Medicaid plans. These regulations can impact the technology standards and policy and processes involved in state plans. These regulations can also impact a state's own Medicaid policies. The final impact of these regulatory requirements come down to budget, and how a state can maximize the Federal Financial Participation (FFP) for changes in its Medicaid programs. Figure 1 illustrates the major components a project manager needs to be mindful of when planning and running a Medicaid project.
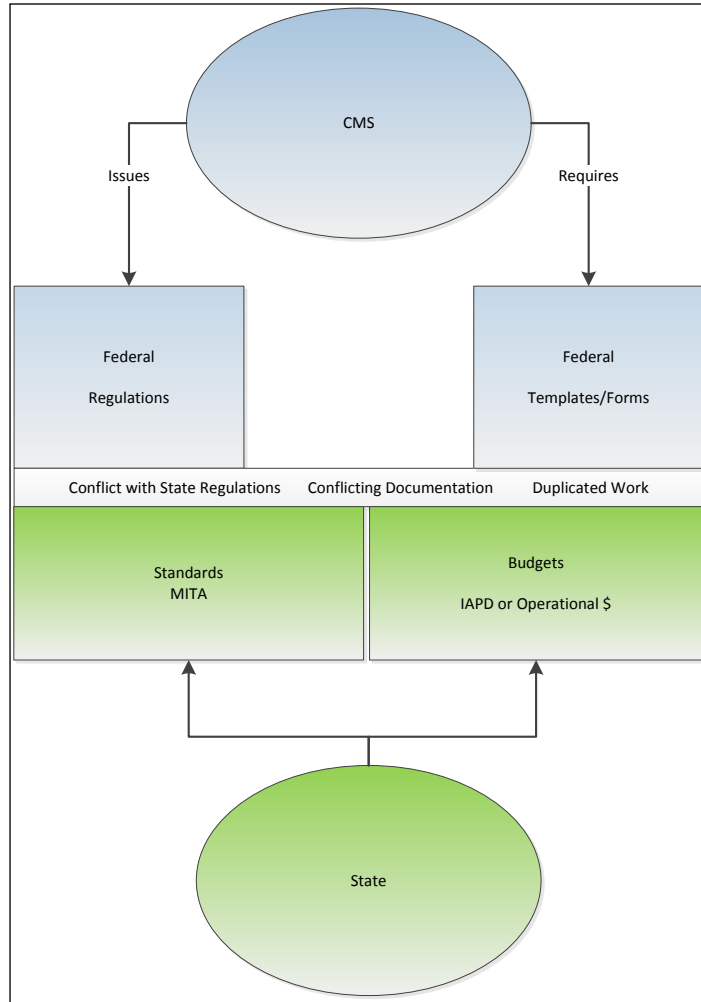
Figure 1 - CMS and State Interactions

The remaining portion of this paper will discuss these major components and offer tips for how to handle these different areas to ensure your Medicaid project is a success.

Federal Regulations Impact on State Regulations and Standards – Nothing Ever Stands Still

In a typical large corporate environment, a Project Manager will receive direction and input around the project requirements, inputs and desired outputs. This sometimes includes mandated deadlines for completing the project, but many times a corporate mandate is the result of a Project Stakeholders desire. In the world of Medicaid project management, deadlines are typically government mandated with the penalties for missing those deadlines being either a fine or loss of funding. However, the mandated deadlines are not the major risk to the project, the real risk to the project arises from the lack of complete information. As shown in Figure 1, CMS will issue federal regulations, these regulations could conflict with state regulations or state standards. These conflicts result in a back and forth between the state and CMS about how to resolve the conflicts. In the meantime, the mandated deadline has not changed.

To address the ever changing requirements, a Medicaid Project Manager must become very adept at assessing and reprioritizing the project schedule to continue progress on items that can be worked while awaiting the final CMS rulings. All the while, a Medicaid Project Manager must continue to work with the stakeholders across the state agencies to create contingency plans to address the possible outcomes of the final CMS rulings. These contingency plans will consist of activities such as manual work arounds, appeals processes, methods and resources at the ready to crash the project if needed.

State Budgets Impact on Projects – IAPD or Operational Dollars – You Need Funding to Run a Project

As part of incentives to enable states to adopt new technology that supports improvements and meaningful use in how healthcare is provided to its residents, the Federal Government provides incentive payments to adopt new technologies such as electronic health records (EHR) and health information exchanges (HIE). The federal funding incentives can cover up to 90% of the cost to implement the systems and 75% of the cost for operational activities. To qualify for these payments, each year an Implementation Advanced Planning Document (IAPD) must be submitted or updated to validate activities qualifying for federal match. The challenge with these types of projects is to maintain forward momentum with the expectation of the federal funding being approved. If federal funding does not come through or is delayed, there are major decisions to be made about how and if to continue the project. Should state operational funds be used to keep the project teams working? Several key areas to enable success as a Project Manager in this arena are to:

- Include updates and key milestones around annual IAPD requests as part of the project plan
- Include contingency planning around people and financial resource utilization in the event Federal matching does not come through or is delayed
- Create a sub-team within the state that has a continual focus on IAPD maximization. Given the focus on running the day to day operations and projects, many states miss out or incorrectly complete their requests for federal funding.

Paperwork and More Paperwork – Federal Forms and State Forms – Does Anyone Win?

Modern project management at most organizations today requires certain types of documentation and process steps to follow as part of running a project. All seasoned Project Managers are comfortable with following a project management methodology. In Medicaid project management, the addition of both federal and state documentation requirements can be compared to the movie "Groundhog Day" – you swear you just completed a request for the same documentation last week that you are working on this week. Maintaining appropriate reporting and documentation for the State Medicaid requirements and then the Federal CMS requirements can be daunting at times. A new Project Manager in the Medicaid arena will many times ask themselves "Is there time to actually manage the project?"

The key strategy to handle compliance with the copious amount of documentation requirements starts with understanding the federal and state requirements. The good news is CMS does a good job on their website of providing plenty of reference material covering the steps and deliverables required. A best practice is to incorporate the federal and state requirements into the project management process and documentation. As you move through each phase of the project, the information is gathered one time and is readily available to complete governmental requirements.

An additional benefit of incorporating the government requirements into the project management process is given the use of electronic forms submittal, completing the required documentation is simplified. The process becomes more a 'cut and paste' from your project documentation into the appropriate governmental forms and templates.

netlogx services

netlogx will be delighted to offer Medicaid project management services to any organization, big or small, that would like to take advantage of it. We can deliver these programs locally as well as over the internet. If you know a business, a state or other institution that would like guidance on this challenging area, please pass on our details.

We also offer Project Management Office (PMO) services to assist organizations in establishing a comprehensive program to meet the ever changing and demanding requirements of working in today's Medicaid environment.