GOVERNMENT TECHNOLOGY

Connecticut Digitizing State Regulatory Process

By Brian Heaton

Connecticut is overhauling its entire regulatory process in a move that should improve transparency and increase efficiency in the state.

An electronic system is being implemented to create, update and share regulations. Instead of state agencies drafting regulations and passing them along in various print and electronic formats, the process will be standardized, allowing for streamlined review and approval. Final regulations and updates will be published online. The new system should also enable state employees and legislators to collaborate remotely on regulatory work and reduce the chance of content errors.

The change is a part of Connecticut Gov. Dannel Malloy's e-regulation initiative, which is being overseen jointly by the offices of Connecticut Secretary of State Denise Merrill and the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services. Regulations are rules drafted by state agencies to ensure and enforce state laws.

Christopher Drake, deputy general counsel with Malloy's office, was tasked with what he thought was a simple project – getting Connecticut's regulations online. But while putting the documents on the Internet was easy, he saw the big challenge was keeping them updated, since agencies were responsible for publishing their own rules and regulations.

"Because we didn't have a central office, we had to figure out a way to keep the code updated once the next new rule came down the pipeline and was finalized," Drake said. "So that's when we got into a much bigger IT project, because we needed to explore what technology was out there to help us do that with limited staffing."

Moving forward, the Secretary of State's office will be the official publisher of the state's regulations. Drake added that there may be some financial savings generated due to increased efficiency, but Connecticut's priority with the project is to improve transparency of the state's regulatory process.

A number of technologies will be used to digitize Connecticut's regulatory process. Agencies will use Quark XML Author as a plug-in to Microsoft Word to draft regulations. That way, as something is written, code to display the text properly in different formats is generat-

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ed without the user doing anything.

IBM Case Manager will be used to send the regulatory document back and forth to various people. The system improves workflow by generating an email to the next person in the review chain so they can take actions and push the process along.

When the regulation is ready to be published, Connecticut will offer it as both a PDF for download and as an HTML file that will appear as a Web page. The Quark Publishing Platform is used to finalize the documents.

Connecticut is working with Fairfax Data Systems, which is spearheading the project, and Data Conversion Laboratory, which is handling the actual digitization of its regulatory materials. The regulations will be located on each agency's website.

"Our wealth of experience digitizing and organizing documents for governmental agencies will help improve the content experience for everyone," said Mark Gross, president and CEO of DCL, in a statement. "It's gratifying that both the public sector and the people of Connecticut will benefit from our work."

The project received a bond allocation of approximately $1.7 million for the project as a part of a $50 million package for general upgrades to government technology. Drake said that $1.2 million has been committed to the new system so far, and he expects the system to go live by mid-September.

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