Item 8

(Information Item)

Update on the Grant Delivery System Modernization launch

SUMMARY:
This item provides an update on the launch of the California Student Aid Commission's (Commission) Grant Delivery System Modernization (GDSM) for the WebGrants for Institutions System and the next phase of deliverables.

RECOMMENDATION:
This is an information item; no action is required

BACKGROUND:
The Commission began the planning phase of the GDSM Project in the 2013-14 fiscal year based on the inadequacies of the 30-year-old Grant Delivery System (GDS) technology. The GDS (WebGrants for Students, California Dream Act, Chafee, National Guard and WebGrants for Institutions) had limited capability, aging technology, and disjointed functionality which caused new legislative required programs to be supported through either manual processes or the development and implementation of additional one-off systems. The GDS had several critical single points of failure and limited disaster recovery capability.

The GDSM Project Teams worked collaboratively with key stakeholders and student groups, parents, institutional financial aid administrators, high school counselors, and other interested organizations to understand the priority needs for the GDSM project to address. The functions of the modernized system were identified, developed, and finalized through the California Department of Technology Project Approval Lifecycle (PAL) process.

The GDSM Project Team officially kicked off the GDSM project development in October 2018 and is now entering its' fourth and final year (two years of development and two years of maintenance and operations). To date, the team has developed, tested, and released the modernized portals for WebGrants for Students, Chafee online application, National Guard, and most recently the WebGrants for Institutions. Over 450,000 accounts have been created in GDSM for various applications and thousands of users have logged in to check their award status, change passwords and provide demographic information, make school changes, complete supplemental application forms, and manage their awards.

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The new modernized WebGrants system is a state-of-the-art infrastructure with no single point of failure and has a built-in disaster recovery. The new upgraded applications are secure, modular, scalable, and have a single sign-on system with advanced features that allow the users to access their information in a secure environment. The new enhanced tools help guide students through their application and award process.

The second phase of GDSM included WebGrants for Institutions, California Dream Act Application, and stabilization of newly launched production applications. On May 10, 2021, WebGrants for Intuitions was successfully launched into production with no disruption to the institutions or students. The GDSM Project Team provided training webinars and videos on the new WebGrants screens to prepare users for accessing the new modernized system in advance of the launch.

The California Dream Act Application will be launched in June 2021. The GDSM Project Team has scheduled various quarterly releases to stabilize production applications as well enhancements.

ANALYSIS:
The agile method was adopted for this project, which allowed the project team to deliver code and other necessary artifacts at the end of two-week sprints. Deliverables included mockup designs, business input, code development, testing, documentation, and final release on production servers. This allowed the team to plan a major release of the application every three months.

HIGH-LEVEL ARTIFACTS DELIVERED:

October 2019	Identity Management System
October 2019	Infrastructure (Network, Servers, Database) for GDSM
December 2019	Web Grants for Students, Middle Class Scholarship (MCS)
February 2020	Chafee Application and Website
May 2020	California National Guard Application
May 2021	Web Grants for Institutions

HIGH LEVEL PLANNED DELIVERABLES:

Projected June 2021	California Dream Act Application

The investment in the GDSM Project has provided the following benefits to the students and institutions we serve and Commission staff:

- Latest Technology Platform
- Accessibility via all modern browsers, smart phones, and tablets
- Expanded Self Service
- Ease of use with a new look and feel
- Improved and automated processes

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- ADA Compliant
- Improved Security, Stability, and Performance
- Greater resilience and adaptability
- Accessible infrastructure with built-in disaster recovery

The GDSM Project Team is now in the final phase of the project which includes stabilization and training Commission staff for ongoing maintenance and operations. At the end of this phase, the GDS legacy system will be retired. Furthermore, the GDSM Project Team is planning to release new features and functionality on a regular basis to improve the services provided to students and institutions, as well as continuing to improve administrative efficacy.

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