

Item 14

(Information Item)

Update on the Grant Delivery System Modernization Project

SUMMARY:

This item provides an update on the Grant Delivery System Modernization Project (GDSM) and the next phase of deliverables.

RECOMMENDATION:

This is an information item; no action is required

BACKGROUND:

CSAC began the planning phase of the GDSM Project in the 2013-14 fiscal year based on the inadequacies of the current 30-year-old Grant Delivery System (GDS) technology. The existing GDS system has limited capability, aging technology, and disjointed functionality which causes new legislative required programs to be supported through either manual processes or the development and implementation of additional one-off systems. The existing GDS has several critical single points of failures and limited disaster recovery capability.

The GDSM Project Team officially kicked off the GDSM development in October 2018. Presently, the GDSM development project is in its' second year of four years (two years of development and two years of maintenance and operations). To date, the team has developed, tested, and released the modernized WebGrants for Students portal and Chafee online application, both now in production. Over 187,000 students have created a WebGrants account since December 16, 2019, and thousands have logged in to check their award status, change passwords, or other demographic information and make a school change.

The new WebGrants for Students portal is a secure, single sign-on system with advanced features that allows the users to access their information and new tools to help guide them through their Cal Grant process. The modernized applications for the California National Guard Program and the California Dream Act are currently being tested and will be deployed when completed. The team has also developed a state-of-the-art infrastructure with no single point of failure and with built-in disaster recovery.

The second phase of GDSM, WebGrants for Institutions, began in August of 2019 and has included a series of stakeholder meetings. Earlier this year, Commission staff and business analysts visited several institutions from various higher education segments to understand their daily use of the current GDS applications and to identify and prioritize how to address their pain points. The most common GDS pain points were matched with original requirements to ensure we can address them within the State-approved GDSM project scope.

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ANALYSIS:

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

The agile method was adopted for this project, which means that the project team plans its' schedule of items to be completed within a two-week "sprint" and delivers code and other necessary artifacts at the end of each sprint. Deliverables include mockup design, business input, code development, testing, documentation, and final release on production servers. This allows the team to plan a major release of the application every three months. At this time the project is running about 8 weeks behind the original schedule due to competing priorities, such as the software development required to address Student with Dependents award changes.

HIGH-LEVEL ARTIFACTS DELIVERED:

October 1, 2019	Identity Management System
October 1, 2019	Infrastructure (Network, Servers, Database) for GDSM
December 16, 2019	Webgrants for Students
December 16, 2019	Middle Class Scholarship (MCS)
February 4, 2020	Chafee Application
February 7, 2020	Chafee Website

HIGH LEVEL PLANNED DELIVERABLES:

California National Guard Program:	In Testing
California Dream Act Application:	In Testing
WebGrants for Institutions:	In Development

The GDSM Project Team continues to look for ways to accelerate the GDSM project timeline without compromising the integrity of the initiative. The project is expected to be completed in November 2020. Upon completion of the project, Modernized Grant Delivery System will have the following features:

- Latest Technology Platform
- Accessible via all modern browsers, smart phones, and tablets
- Expanded Self Service
- Ease of use to Students and Institutions
- Improved and automated processes
- ADA Compliant
- Improved Security, Stability, and Performance
- Greater resilience and adaptability
- Highly available infrastructure with built-in disaster recovery

The final stage of GDSM in 2021 is stabilization and training state staff for ongoing maintenance and operations. At the end of this stage, the GDS legacy system will be retired.

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RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S):

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ATTACHMENT(S):

GDSM Project Timeline

GDSM Efficiency List