



## Child Support IT Systems Modernization Project Update

Submitted to the House Appropriations Committee  
by the Office of the Attorney General

September 30, 2020

# MODERNIZATION PROJECT

### Introduction

The Child Support Division (CSD) of the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) administers the Title IV-D child support program for the state of Texas. Over the past 20 years, the program's caseload has grown to 1.5 million cases, serving 1.7 million children. The modernization of processes and technology is critical to the Division's ability to meet the evolving needs of Texas families.

At the conclusion of the last legislative session, the OAG embarked upon a journey to research and identify a best-in-class modernization approach and assembled a team of seasoned experts to ensure CSD's future modernization strategic objectives and goals are fully realized and successful.

### Overall Approach

In the fall of 2019, OAG leadership began communicating with state and federal partners about our intent to proceed with an Agile-at-Scale approach to IT systems modernization, moving away from the traditional waterfall methodology. Industrywide, Agile has emerged as the most efficient, cost-effective and successful model for developing scalable, quality-based software products and provides a proven path toward transforming unsustainable legacy systems into modern, sustainable applications.

The OAG-CSD will transform Texas child support service delivery and the technology that supports it through the use of low-code technologies, embracing a full transformation to an Agile-at-Scale model and mindset, and a rigorous, yet adaptive approach to project management, procurement and vendor oversight.

We are guided by the following principles:

- Start small and build momentum
- Contain risk through smaller contracts with quick offramps
- Fully engage business users
- Develop requirements just-in-time
- Configure when we can, customize when we must
- Test early and often
- Deliver quality, functioning software frequently
- Plan, do, learn, iterate

The project team is grateful to have unequivocal agency Executive, Business and IT leadership support as well as fully engaged partnerships with our state and federal oversight teams. Through a robust Agile business plan and strategy guide, we have developed rigorous governance processes with well-defined methods for prioritization of work and have empowered business and technical teams with the ability to make quick decisions. This strategy has enabled us to scale from a single system modernization component deployment "sprint" to multiple sprints operating in parallel, with plans for continued scaling throughout the life of the project.

### Technical Strategy

The OAG has adopted a low-code, web-portal application development platform to support its vision for iterative development with frequent and ongoing deployment of quality, functional software. Seamless and bi-directional data exchange between newly-developed portal applications and the existing TXCSES Mainframe will allow for the gradual modernization of core child support functions in modern application platforms, with the Mainframe continuing to serve as the user interface for functions that have yet to be modernized. The Mainframe will continue to support back-end functions, such as payment processing, financial and batch processing, until all functions have been fully migrated to modern applications and infrastructure.

### Agile-at-Scale

CSD's Agile process follows the Agile Manifesto principles and primarily uses the Agile Scrum model, augmented by other Agile methodologies and industry best practices. Sprints are comprised of a group of individuals collectively known as a Scrum Team; are timeboxed in duration (one to four weeks), and require specific, defined skill sets, roles and responsibilities. In this model, vendor(s) are contractually accountable and responsible for the successful delivery of the state-defined and approved requirements for each sprint, and work must meet a strict "definition of done" that is defined and agreed upon prior to development. Requirements, in the form of User Stories, are developed just two weeks prior to day-one of a sprint, which ensures requirements are not stale when development begins and avoids change orders and cost overruns. User Stories are decomposed into very specific and detailed requirements called "Acceptance Criteria." OAG staff, acting in their roles as product owners and leads, participate in interim and final demos to ensure sprints stay in scope and on track. During final demonstrations, OAG product owners must sign off on each specific requirement and validate that the software is production-ready before it is accepted as done.

## AGILE TEAMS AND CURRENT PROJECTS

