



## Considerations for Selecting Point-of-Care Solutions

As with all other business decisions, the impact on an agency's overall business must be considered when selecting a point-of-care software solution – or any software solution for that matter. Unfortunately, decisions are often made based on a single criteria, such as technology or price, while ignoring what in some cases are more important issues that determine whether one solution is better than another.

As an example, a vendor might have a low initial price point, but the total cost of ownership might be significantly higher. Other factors that push up the total cost of ownership include the need to purchase hardware in order to use the software; IT requirements to install, configure, and manage the software; ongoing support and maintenance requirements; training time. The need to replace current software being used can run up costs even more. As an example, how expensive would it be to throw out your existing billing system?

It is also important to anticipate future needs. How difficult or expensive will it be to grow the solution under consideration? Will it meet your future needs or will you have to look for another solution within a few years?

Some of the issues that need to be considered include:

- what are your goals
- how scalable is the solution
- how comprehensive is the solution
- how adaptable is the solution to my agency
- how easy is the solution to use
- what other software/hardware is required to use the solution
- what IT resources are required to install and support the software
- what is the total cost of ownership

### ***Identifying the Goals***

Clearly identifying your goals will help you make a better informed decision. Are you trying to solve a specific short-term problem. Or, are you trying to find a solution that addresses a range of issues and will continue to meet your growing needs over time?

### ***Scalability***

The scalability of the solution should be an important consideration. As your organization grows, can the solution scale up to meet your requirements. A process-intensive solution that might work for a very small number of users, might not be suitable as the number of users increases. IT involvement might be minimal for a few users, but substantial for a larger group of users. How much more training, IT support, management, and processes are needed as the number of users and level of activities grow?



### ***Comprehensive vs. Limited Functionality***

The comprehensiveness of the solutions should be considered when comparing alternatives. You want to make sure that you are comparing apples-to-apples before deciding that one solution is better than another. Some solutions address one or a limited number of functions while others provide a more comprehensive solution.

If you decide on a limited functionality solution, then you need to consider what you would do to handle other functions, problems, or issues. Do you look for another solution for these? What costs are involved in doing this? What are the implications and costs for using multiple programs and solutions from multiple vendors?

### ***Ease of Use***

A solution will only be successful if it is easy to use. A low-cost solution that your staff dislikes will end up costing you money. Is the usage intuitive? Will a lot of training be needed before your staff can use the solution? Will it require your staff to learn a new computer program? How similar is the solution to the forms and processes your staff currently uses? The easier the transition from what you are currently doing, the more likely the solution will be embraced by your staff.

### ***Adaptability***

Whether a solution is adaptable to your agency needs and processes is a consideration. Most software requires you to adapt to it. This might mean that you need to retrain your staff, change your processes, and change your environment. Not only could this be costly and time consuming, but it could also cause frustration with your field and office staff. No one solution fits all. Solutions that adapt to you can provide your agency a better fit.

### ***Hardware/Software Requirements***

It is critical to consider the hardware and software requirements for a proposed solution. Some solutions require you to purchase laptops, tablet PCs, or PDAs in order to use it. This can be a significant out-of-pocket expense. This expense continues to grow as you hire additional staff. Solutions that don't require specific hardware devices substantially reduce costs. They also provide users greater flexibility in accessing the application.

### ***IT Resources Required***

Some solutions require you to provide IT resources and support. This can be costly. Solutions that place the burden of software distribution, installation, configuration, updating, backup, archiving, and support on you or your staff can be very expensive. In some cases, it might require you to hire IT staff or increase the workload on your current staff. Other solutions require none or limited IT support on your part.