

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

Special Master Recommendations

IV, et al.,

Plaintiffs,

-against-

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION, et al.,

Defendants.

March 29, 2023
FINAL

Prepared for

Loretta A. Preska

Senior United States District Judge

Key terms

Order a decision, determination, order or statement of agreement issued by an Impartial Hearing Officer

Action Item a specific, identifiable action in an Order that, as determined by the Independent Auditor, requires implementation by the DOE

Payment Action Item a component of an order requiring DOE to make a direct payment to a parent, private service provider, or private school

Service Action Item a component of an order requiring DOE to take any action (other than make a payment directly)

Contents

1. Executive Summary

2. Introduction

3. Detailed Recommendations

- Implementing Payment Orders and Action Items
- Implementing Service Orders and Action Items
- Staffing Needs of the DOE Implementation Unit
- DAITS and Relevant Systems
- Implementing Orders & Action Items Outstanding 35+ Days
- Monitoring Processes & Standards for Compliance

4. Appendices

1. Proposed Organization of the Implementation Unit
2. Central-Based Service Order Processes
3. Near-Term Approach to Data Systems
4. Draft Enhancements to DAITS (near-term)
5. OOC-required documentation
6. Special Master Program Monitoring Approach

Background

This report was informed by a detailed assessment phase of New York City Department of Education (DOE) Implementation Unit processes, as ordered by the United States District Court, Southern District of New York. Interviews were conducted with dozens of individuals, including DOE staff, Plaintiffs, parents/families, providers/school staff, NYS Education Department staff, NYC FISA staff, NYC Comptroller staff and members of the Education Law Task Force. Relevant reports, declarations, memorandums, process documentation, process forms, and DOE data systems functions were reviewed. An understanding of the current processes was documented per the information collected and was then analyzed to identify areas of improvement, resulting in the recommendations that follow in this report.

Thank you to all the individuals who contributed their time, insights and ideas to this process.

Executive Summary

In 2007, the parties settled a class action lawsuit, resulting in a settlement which developed a governing document, the Stipulation, to measure compliance moving forward. The parties agreed to the Stipulation and an Independent Auditor has been in the role of measuring compliance.

When a special education hearing is held, an Impartial Hearing Officer overseeing the case can issue the decision that a service be provided or payment be made on behalf of the student. The NYC DOE then has 35 days to implement the order (unless otherwise specified), whether by making a payment and/or arranging the necessary service(s) for the student.

The DOE created an office, termed the Implementation Unit (IU), to manage the process by which these payments are authorized and services are arranged. The workflows and processes involved in this work are the subject of this report.

Impartial Hearings and the resulting orders and decisions are at an all-time high in NYC, and increasing. The pandemic has exacerbated requests for impartial hearings and DOE has been unable to manage the volume.

The multi-layered problems span aspects of people (roles and organization), process and technology. A lack of attention and investments to these aspects historically is one of the root causes of the present day problems.

NYC DOE's processes are manual and rely on the individual data entry of case information at multiple workflow steps, causing bottlenecks and backlogs, slowing the entire process significantly.

NYC DOE leadership is committed to solving the problem of delayed implementations and are already in process of managing many of the recommendations in this report.

At the time of this writing, work is underway by the DOE to process orders more efficiently and in a timelier manner. Additional staff are in process of being added and the Implementation Unit has been exploring ways to process cases more efficiently.

Digitalization will be a key to timelier implementations, but the redesign and build of the NYC DOE's special education data system (and impartial hearing module) is years from roll-out and is not a near-term solution.

Recommendations Overview

People

Address the DOE staffing crisis in the near term. In the long term, modernization of processes and data will greatly reduce the need for increasing counts of staff.

Process

Improve communications in arranging services and develop a customer support function for parents and providers. Gather and store case documentation more efficiently to reduce outreach needed.

Technology

Digitalize the order by providing an intuitive web form for the Hearing Officer to populate key attributes in issuing a decision. Leverage the data to more efficiently manage the operations of the Implementation Unit.

Recommendations Overview

People

Process

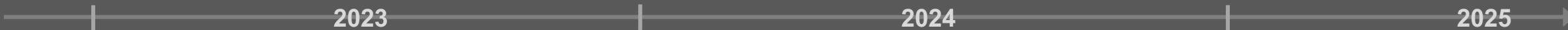
Technology

Address the DOE staffing crisis in the near term. In the long term,

It is commonly regarded across NYC agencies at the time of this writing that candidates for open City positions are reluctant to apply or are declining offers primarily in favor of other positions that permit work-from-home arrangements. It is also a major factor in the increasing volume of resignations at DOE.

In the instance of LV, loss of staff results in longer processing times to implement the decision mandated by an impartial hearing – a simple example of the resulting impact is a student with a disability who does not receive the ordered services of a nurse in a timely fashion in order to attend school. There are additional staffing issues at DOE, but this one can be addressed now: **All administrative positions supporting special education at DOE must be permitted a full-time work-from-home option.** Right now, the existing WFH policy, among other factors, is severely and unnecessarily hindering the DOE's capacity to serve the needs of the City's most at-risk students in an acceptable timeframe.

High-Level Implementation Roadmap (LV)



Service Action Items

Define and execute a process to validate implementation of service action items, (i.e., confirm services were provided) | | | |

Formalize roles and process for implementation Liaisons; establish customer support function, POCs | Continually communicate with the Liaison community (Citywide) LV updates, points of contact, protocols, etc. | | | |

Payment Action Items

Prepare for workflow changes | Execute on process changes recommended in this report and others identified subsequently. Modify approach to payment documentation requirements of parents/providers/schools, (as detailed in this report). | | | |

Assess digital invoicing market | Identify and configure digital invoicing tool / plan for data | Launch and manage process of transitioning providers to digital invoicing process and tool | | | |

People

Form a working group of Implementation Unit (IU) and DOE HR leadership to coordinate hiring practices | Develop plan for staff professional development | Develop career pathways for staff

Develop customer support model | Launch customer support for stakeholders to seek help on individual cases (e.g., helpdesk) | | | |

Systems

Build an automated service to generate emails to parents and attorneys notifying them of key milestones | | | | Rollout SEDMS

Fix DAITS crashes and outages | Address other priority needs and pain points in DAITS – build/release solutions | Support SEDMS pre-launch activities, such as training, communications, etc.

Analytics

Define data pts of the digital order | Support design and development of the digital order. Confirm data is captured in optimal format for the IU to process. Leverage incoming data to triage operations | | | |

Define initial IU KPIs and recruit Analysts | Collect data assets; address quality | | | |

Develop the information products needed for the IU to answer questions, inform decisions, and efficiently manage implementation of orders | | | |

Governance

Establish Steering Team to monitor progress of the modernization initiative / partner with OATH and NYSED

Recommended Next Steps

1. Form and convene Steering Team of DOE leadership charged with facilitation of decision-making and issue resolution throughout the due process modernization effort.
2. Appoint a project director and establish business owners around the areas of people, process and technology.
3. Steering Team to discuss cadence, challenges, quick wins. Special Master team to initiate project monitoring activities.

Introduction

Scope of the Special Master

Pursuant to your Honor's Order (Docket No. 273), Section 3(a) Re: L.V., et al. v. New York City Dept. of Educ., et al., No. 03 Civ. 9917

Process Findings

1

Implementing
Payment
Orders and
Action Items

2

Implementing
Service Orders
and Action
Items

3

Staffing Needs
of the DOE
Implementation
Unit

4

DAITS and
Relevant
Systems

5

Implementing
Orders &
Action Items
Outstanding
35+ Days

6

Monitoring
Processes &
Standards for
Compliance

Recommendations

Make Recommendations to
DOE Processes

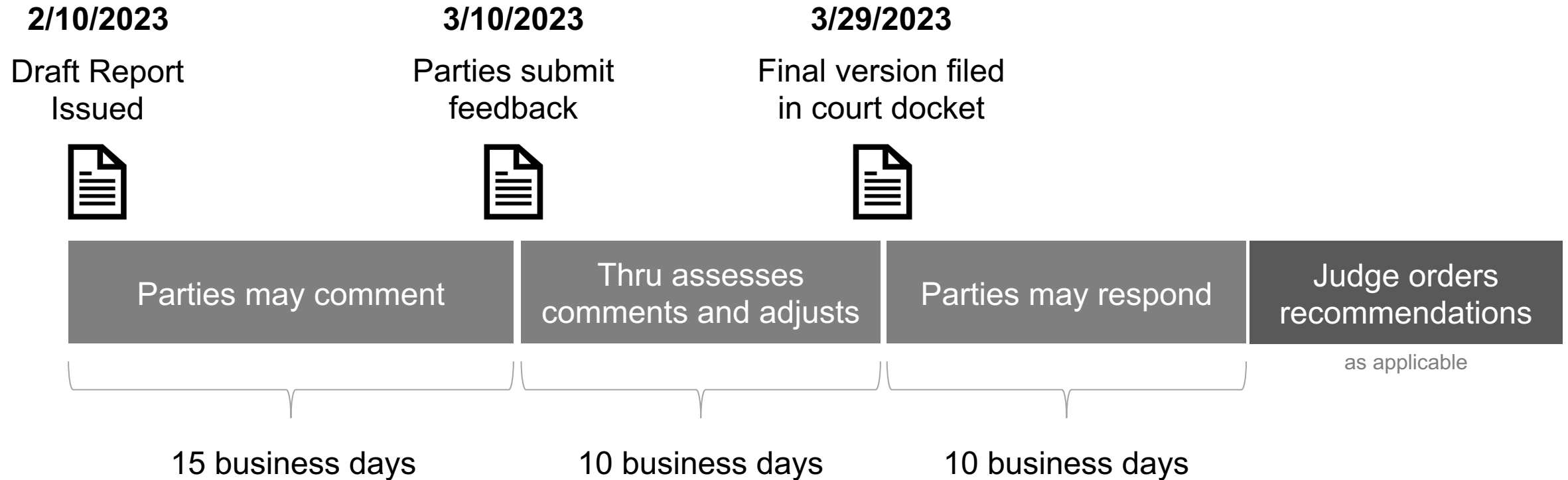
Scope of this report

Facilitate discussion between
Parties

Assess and report on
recommendations ordered by
the Court

Review Process of This Report

We can anticipate submitting the final version of this report to your Honor by 3/29/2023.



DOE Acronyms

BNPSP Bureau of Non-Public School Payables

DAITS Data system into which orders must be entered to delineate actions

DPC Due Process Complaint

DIIT Division of Instructional and Information Technology

DSISS Division of Specialized Instruction and Student Support, (i.e., Special Ed. Office)

DFO Division of Financial Operations

FAMIS Financial Management System of the DOE

FISA NYC Financial Information Services Agency

FMS/3 Financial Management System of other NYC mayoral agencies

IHO Impartial Hearing Office

NYC/DOE Acronyms (continued)

IHS Impartial Hearing System

IA Independent Auditor appointed by the LV Stipulation

IU Implementation Unit (OGC)

OGC Office of the General Counsel

OSE Office of Student Enrollment

OPT Office of Pupil Transportation

OATH NYC Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings

SEGIS current Special Education Student Information System

SEDMS future Special Education Data Management System (replacing SEGIS)

SEU Special Education Unit (OGC)

Detailed Recommendations

Detailed recommendations are organized by these process areas.

Overall

1. Implementing Payment Orders and Action Items

2. Implementing Service Orders and Action Items

3. Staffing Needs of the DOE Implementation Unit

4. DAITS and Relevant Systems

5. Implementing Orders & Action Items Outstanding 35+ Days

6. Monitoring Processes & Standards for Compliance

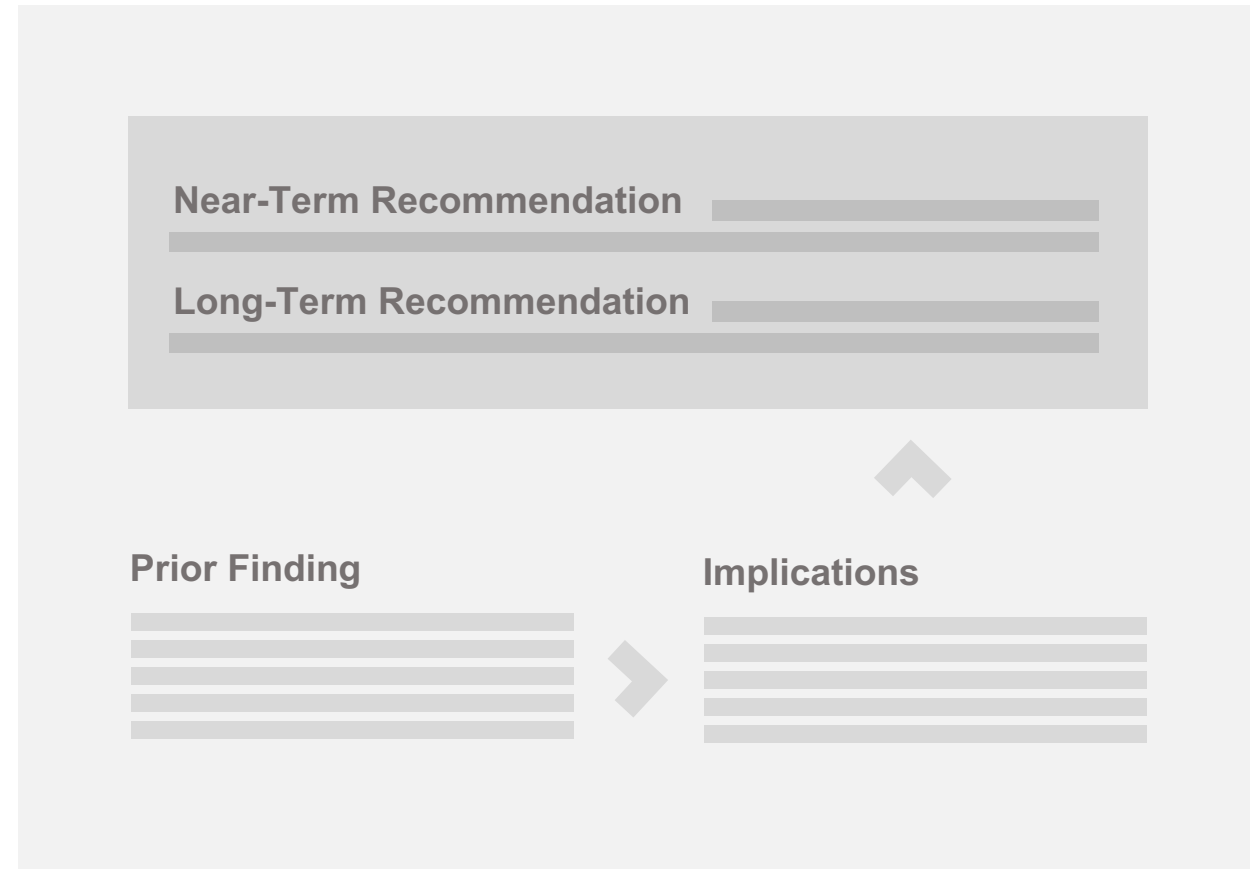
The six areas of DOE processes identified by the Court for the Special Master to review comprise the six detailed sections of requirements in this report. Each of the process areas includes specific near-term and long-term recommendations for NYC DOE.

Introduction to Detailed Recommendations

The findings related to the implementation of orders, delivered previously to the Court, are the basis for the recommendations in this report. The individual findings and implications have been replicated here with their now corresponding recommendations.

Recommendations contain both near-term and long-term actions (sub-recommendations). The contents of the executive summary is an aggregation of these detailed recommendations.

Detailed Recommendations Format



Overall | Support Families and Advocates

Near-term 1-NT Develop a customer support plan (people and tools) and timeline to build the capacity for the Implementation Unit to address questions from parents and providers, (e.g., a “helpdesk”), routing Tier II questions to IU Implementation Managers. See also B3-NT.

Long-term 1-LT Develop and deploy an accessible status indicator (e.g., web-based) for parents to easily view their case’s status in the due process workflow.

Prior Finding

1. DOE's implementation processes were designed to quickly address the lawsuit at a time of relatively low volume (10+ years ago; hundreds of orders per year); they were not designed to facilitate the volume of orders/action items they now must manage (i.e., thousands of orders per year).



Implications



Processes should be redesigned to minimize data entry, minimize touchpoints, streamline workflows, and improve overall efficiency.

Processes should be designed to centralize communications, monitor compliance, and include a core principle to empathize with the stakeholders’, (i.e., families’), experience.

Overall | Monitoring Performance

Near-term 2-NT For the Implementation Unit and OGC to monitor progress of implementations, define key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure effectiveness of the IU's operations, (e.g., time to unpack an order). Assess existing data assets for ability to measure. See F1-NT.

Long-term 2-LT Copy and collect data assets from implementation-related data sources (e.g., DAITS, IHS, FAMIS, etc.) to analyze for IU workflow purposes. Analyze data as per KPIs, to identify solutions to problems, and to answer questions and hypotheses.

Prior Finding

2. The Stipulation places no ownership or accountability for monitoring compliance on the DOE. It is explicitly placed with the Independent Auditor.



Implications

The parties have historically relied on the reports and data of the Independent Auditor to measure compliance. These reports are currently in arrears (due to volume/backlog of the Independent Auditor), and so there is virtually no current information available on DOE's implementation/compliance.

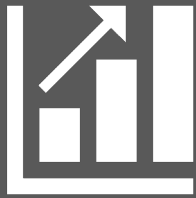
Other than reports of incoming orders and payment order volume, the DOE has not created any formal monitoring processes, because the role has historically been assumed by the Independent Auditor.

The DOE is not currently prepared to assume ownership of monitoring compliance, (i.e., no roles, processes, tools).



Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Implementation

Sample metrics currently monitored by the IU/OGC



- Total backlog to be unpacked
- Total backlog to be authorized
- Total invoices paid
- Invoices received
- New orders received
- Invoices paid
- Vouchers issued and amounts
- Net progress = completed – received orders
- Action items authorized

Sample / potential key performance indicators to be monitored by the IU/OGC



- Time to unpack or authorize an order by type
- Number / amount of overpayments
- Time from hearing to order intake (into IU data system)
- Number of authorizations by type
- Net progress versus backlog - forecasted
- Time from invoice to payment made
- Time from intake of order to service implemented – by type

Overall | Streamline Processes

Near-term 3-NT In accordance with ongoing user research around due process (i.e., Zenda), redesign the workflows and address key pain points around the implementation of payment orders and service orders. Document the improved processes and incorporate new workflows into trainings and communications.

Long-term 3-LT Maintain documentation of workflows and continue process of streamlining processes by adding the role of Implementation Systems Analyst to the Due Process Systems and Analytics Office. The role would be ongoing versus a single instance of change. See Appendix I for further description of the role.

Prior Finding

3. The Implementation Unit's tools and technology are unsuited and insufficient for the workflow, collaboration and outreach that must be performed, (e.g., paper forms; no integration with SESIS; email-based everything).



Implications

This leads to severe process inefficiencies (e.g., labor-intensive data entry of individual case details), backlogs (e.g., unpacking, invoices), errors/omissions/overpayments (e.g., from interpreting handwritten invoices), longer processing times (i.e., detailed, manual data entry), and widespread stakeholder frustration (e.g., no payee communications, "DOE is a black hole").

The process needs to be redesigned to eliminate redundancies, take advantage of available technology, and integrate with other systems, to the extent possible.



Overall | Digitalize IHO Order Format

Near-term 4-NT Recognizing they do not fall under the authority of this Court, invite OATH and NYSED leadership to join DOE in a commission to develop a shared framework for issuing the Impartial Hearing Officer's decision / order, (see 6-NT). The Special Master, as per the order of the Court, can support and facilitate discussions such as these and we propose a working group (a "Task Force") led by the Special Master to coordinate efforts and work through challenges. Focus is on tools and training of Impartial Hearing Officers.

Long-term 4-LT Build the structured input fields of the Hearing Officer's decision/order as required (6-NT). Develop a communications plan, messaging/training and communicate new process to Hearing Officers.

Prior Finding

4. The core inputs to the implementation process (i.e. Orders issues by Impartial Hearing Officers) are composed of unstructured data (text) that require interpretation, judgment and translation (i.e. into Action Items) on the part of the Implementation Unit staff. This is the first gate in all implementation processes and the source of the first backlog point. Impartial Hearing Officers are, by definition, impartial to any organization or party, but take direction from, and are employed by, NYSED.



Implications

The lengthy activities involved with "unpacking" an Order are necessary as an element of the Implementation Unit's processes, because Orders may be made up of multiple action items. The lack of standardization in format from Hearing Officers to the IU creates extra work for staff. Standardization would facilitate implementation far more efficiently. Related recommendations must involve collaboration with NYSED and IHO.



Overall | Catalogue and Share Available Services

Near-term 5-NT See 6-NT. Build and maintain a toolkit of existing assistive technology that DOE can implement in a relatively timely manner. Build and maintain an ongoing inventory of DOE services, programs, schools for quickly populating Hearing Officer decision form fields, (with an 'Other' option).

Long-term 5-LT See 4-LT. Build the Hearing Officer decision input process to include above data values, with the express recognition, and ability for, hearing officers to order services and technology not on the lists. Maintain lists of available assistive technologies and services.

Prior Finding

5. NYC DOE and its schools have finite resources and capacity to implement action items. This does not appear to be taken into account, by Impartial Hearing Officers when issuing Orders and making decisions.

The stipulation contains procedures for when the DOE believes that an Action Item is "impossible" to implement, requiring the DOE to appeal or offer an equivalent alternative.



Implications



Actions ordered may lead to false expectations of timeframes among families, attorneys, and/or may not comply with DOE policy. The DOE is not permitted to avoid implementation of an order because it is against DOE policy or procedure. But orders are issued that cannot be implemented by DOE and/or left for the Implementation Unit to determine how to implement an action item not provided by DOE.

Overall | Structure Unstructured Orders

Near-term 6-NT Define the core data points needed to document and triage an order and an action item, (e.g., type, deadline). With endorsement from DOE, OATH and NYSED leadership, research and design a web-based interface for Impartial Hearing Officers to issue decisions. Build the user-friendly web form for capturing orders from Hearing Officers in phases to add key data points for implementation over time. Includes the ability to capture the decision/order in writing. See 4-NT.

Long-term 6-LT See 4-LT and A2-LT.

Prior Finding

6. With Hearing Officers conveying unstructured data in the format of their order, the need to then convert this into structured data in the form of action items is a key bottleneck. A standardized form of data capture for the Hearing Officers (action items) does not exist.



Implications

We believe that in order to facilitate future implementations more efficiently and quickly, both, designing for standardization (in documenting orders) and ensuring FAPE, must be considered critical / complementary goals of future work. From an operations perspective, one cannot be done without the other.



Overall | Mitigate Complexity/Training Risks

Near-term 7-NT In planning for training, formalize an approach to sustaining knowledge of implementation processes, such as one that empowers experienced staff to onboard, train and mentor more junior staff, (e.g. recognition, reward). See C6-NT.

Long-term 7-LT Expand the LV Payment/Service Guidelines (for IU staff) into an *Operating Procedures Manual*, and design and implement a professional development series for staff.

Prior Finding

7. The work of the Implementation Unit requires staff to possess authoritative knowledge of education law and local regulations (federal/IDEA, state and NYC), prior lawsuit settlements and Court orders, City policy, NYC DOE policy, NYC special education protocols and procedures, (e.g. IEPs, RSAs, evaluations), and internal operations (e.g. unpacking action items, authorization, etc.) in order to perform the duties required of implementing Orders. Training of new staff is primarily experiential (i.e. on the job, side by side with an experienced staff member) and time-consuming.



Implications



This creates a staffing and training challenge for the Implementation Unit, because there is simply a limited supply of individuals with this type of knowledge. (This knowledge is typically gained by working in other areas of NYC special ed law - not through traditional training.) Complexity of processes and rules will create a huge challenge for re-engineering processes, fit-gap analysis, selection and implementation of technology solutions (just as it does for SESIS).

Overall | LV IU Process Definition

Near-term 8-NT Use the process flows and recommendations provided in this report as a baseline for the development of the *Operating Procedures Manual* described in 7-LT. Identify writers, contributors and proofreaders.

Long-term 8-LT See 7-LT

Prior Finding

8. DOE's documented internal procedures around payment and service orders (LV Guidelines) were developed 10+ years ago and have not been updated or maintained. The DAITS User Guide was developed and last updated in 2009. There is no documented process or workflow at the City level, (i.e., across Agencies and Departments with a role in implementation)



Implications

Awareness of the end-to-end order/payment process at the Department and City level is inconsistent. This is contributing to a lack of transparency and awareness of how the process works; individual interpretations of the official process; broader (external) stakeholder frustrations (i.e. no one in DOE is aware of all steps for making payments and it is not documented).



Overall | Due Process Modernization Team

Near-term 9-NT Convene a Steering Team to oversee progress of these initiatives, as outlined on the following slide. Appoint a project owner to coordinate and manage the people, process and technology work resulting from these recommendations. Leverage the initiatives and timeframes defined in this report as a starting point and adapt, as necessary.

Long-term 9-LT Track and report status of the roadmap initiatives on an ongoing basis. Identify risks and issues and proactively manage. Escalate issues and key risks to the Modernization Steering Team.

Prior Finding

9. DOE's processes and tools have not been redesigned or re-engineered to improve operations or evolve with the times (needs). The findings that follow in this report may well have been reported previously - many of these findings are not new.

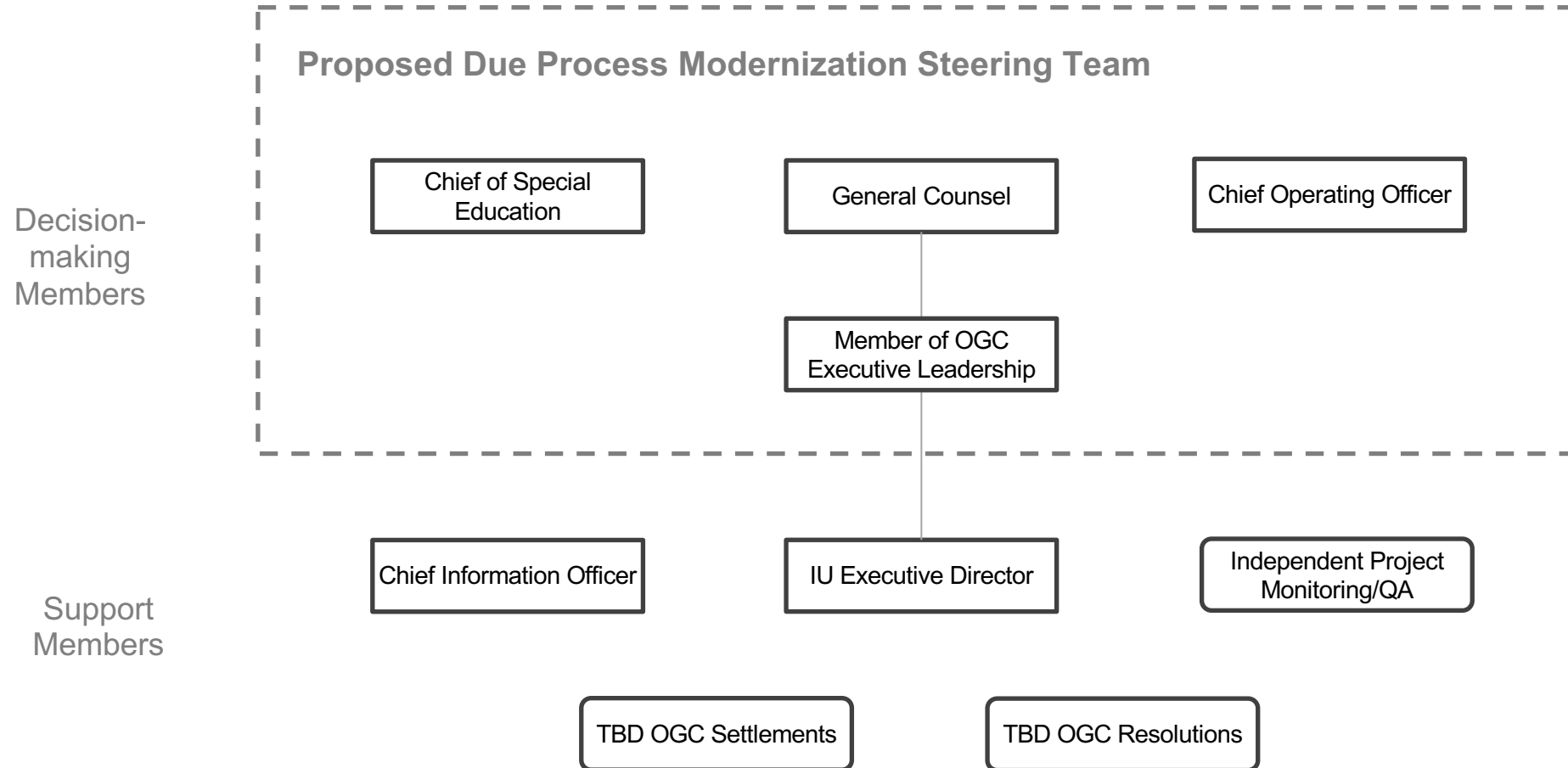


Implications

The Special Master will develop recommendations to address the findings in this report. Recommendations will be based on new ideas and innovations as well as context and understanding for what prevented previous recommendations from being implemented. There are opportunities to remove barriers, streamline workflows, improve data and systems, and support a hard-working team in the IU.



Overall | Modernization Steering Team



Overall | Service Order Process Fidelity

Near-term 10-NT See 8-NT. See Appendix II for Central-based process recommendations.

Long-term 10-LT See 7-LT.

Prior Finding

10. The collective understanding of the service order process across DOE roles and offices is not aligned. Plaintiffs (via families) report processes being employed in the field that do not match DOE's stated processes. Examples:

- There isn't a single role that conveys the order to the school (Liaison (outside IU) vs IU)
- DOE and Plaintiffs disagree on role of who issues an RSA (school vs IU).
- DOE and Plaintiffs report opposing opinions on the extent and effectiveness of coordination across DOE offices, (e.g., OPT and OSH).



Implications



We believe that this lack of a common understanding of the processes and lack of defined roles are at the root of a slower workflow and inability to keep up with the volume of orders. This could be a source of broken processes and missed communications in implementing service orders. This is one of the core problems identified through our data gathering.

Overall Findings

Implementing
Payment Orders
and Action Items

Implementing
Service Orders
and Action Items

Staffing Needs of
the DOE
Implementation
Unit

DAITS and
Relevant Systems

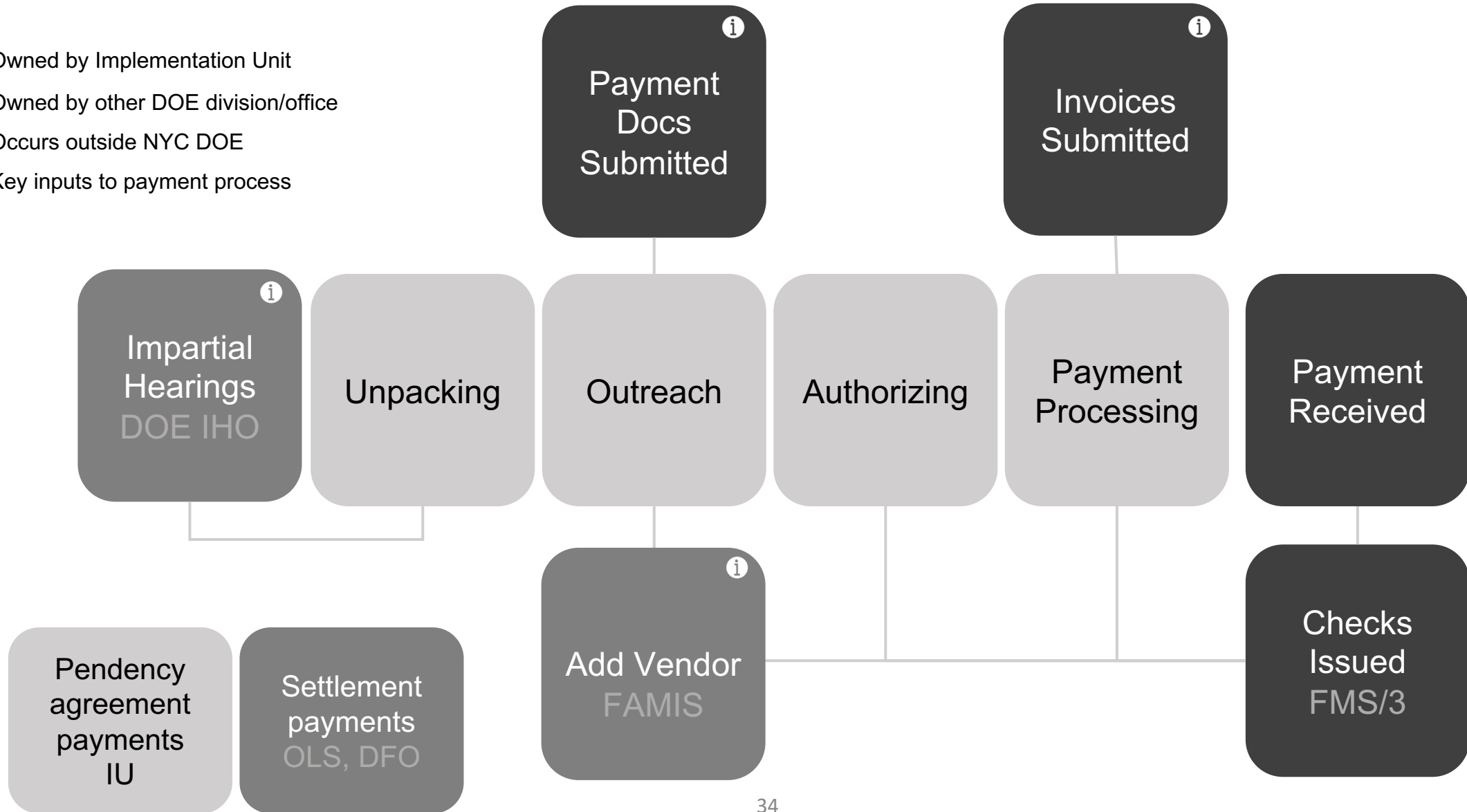
Implementing
Orders & Action
Items Outstanding
35+ Days

Monitoring
Processes &
Standards for
Compliance

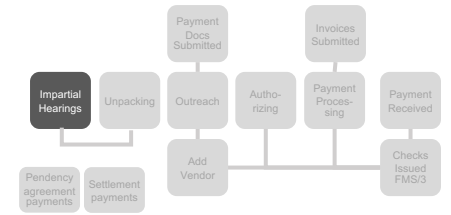
DOE's Processes for Implementing Payment Orders and Action Items

Payment Orders and Action Items Process

- Owned by Implementation Unit
- Owned by other DOE division/office
- Occurs outside NYC DOE
- Key inputs to payment process



Payment Orders | Payment Documentation



Near-term A1-NT Explore a simple file-sharing process and tool to improve transparency of all documentation presented as evidence at the hearing (automated if possible; manual if necessary). Ensure all pertinent documents can be continually accessed by the Implementation Unit.

Long-term A1-LT Centralize the collection, submission and sharing of pertinent documents and evidence among the Impartial Hearings Office, OATH and the IU on a single platform. Establish a process (pre-implementation) by which documentation from families is captured by the IHO rep/staff at hearing, or sooner.

Prior Finding

A-1 Impartial Hearing Officers collect some payment documentation from parents/attorneys or hearing representatives as evidence at the hearing, (as of 2019, per DOE). This documentation is uploaded to the Impartial Hearing System (IHS), but they are not fed into DAITS. Therefore, IU staff must look for the files in IHS manually (“cumbersome”) or collect them afterwards by requesting the documentation through outreach if it was not provided.

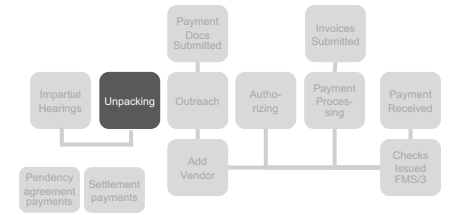


Implications

This is a missed opportunity to streamline the payments process and lessen outreach efforts needed during the Authorization sub-process. Due to the current volume/backlog, outreach may not be conducted until months after the hearing.



Payment Orders | IU Unpacking (2 of 3)



Near-term **A2b-NT** see A6-NT, 6-NT

Long-term **A2b-LT** see A2-LT, 4-LT, 6-LT

Prior Finding

A-2b The Implementation Unit (IU) does not have wide discretion in implementing orders, but rather frequently must make judgment calls through the lens of the LV Stipulation. Implementation Managers are trained to ask about unknowns – e.g., follow-ups with Hearing Officer, escalations to legal/OLS, etc. The range of time to complete unpacking an order ranges from 20 minutes for a simple order, up to 1.5 days for more complex orders that require investigation and/or heavy data entry.

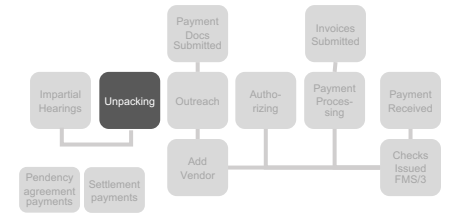


Implications

A lack of standardization in orders and the defining of action items by the Impartial Hearing Officer dictates these judgment calls and follow-ups which add significant time and effort to the unpacking process. One might argue there should not be any unpacking process needed if Impartial Hearing Officers, the IH Office and the IU were integrated and aligned.



Payment Orders | IU Unpacking (3 of 3)



Near-term A3-NT See 6-NT for digitalization of the order which when deployed will save the time of searching emails and the corresponding data entry, (i.e. data will already exist). See next slide for specific payment process steps and approvals to streamline or remove entirely.

Long-term A3-LT see A2-LT

Prior Finding

A-3 Implementation Managers must review the language in the Order, interpret its meanings, clarify any questions, break the Order into its component parts (Action items) and enter them manually into DAITS. The Order must be reviewed again by a supervisor checking for quality/ errors and approving the record, which completes the unpacking process.



Implications

Unpacking is a cumbersome, time-consuming bottleneck affecting all orders and action items.



Digitalizing the Order will streamline unpacking

The change will reduce DOE processing efforts (data entry). It will shift some responsibility to the Hearing Officer.

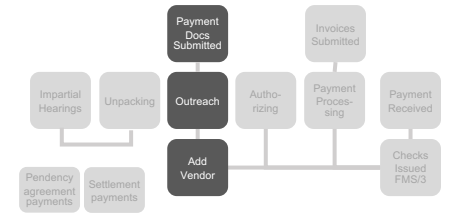
Current Unpacking Process



Digitalized Unpacking Process



Payment Orders | Centralize Documents



Near-term A4-NT see A1-NT. (a) Design a process by which to collect relevant documentation from parents/guardians and attorneys (e.g., proof of payment for tuition or service) earlier on in the DPC process (pre-hearing). Conduct user research with parents to design a web-based (and offline) data collection process to facilitate this. (b) allow parents to submit payment documentation as multiple files or different formats where applicable, (DOE currently requires one PDF file of all documentation combined). Assess system impacts.

Long-term A4-LT see A1-LT.

Prior Finding

A-4 Outreach is conducted by IU after the hearing to obtain the necessary payment forms from payees. These forms are typically emailed to the Implementation Unit or Liaison (following the hearing). To initially register payees, W-9/SSN documentation is collected and passed on to DCP to enter in FAMIS who reviews it for accuracy and submits it (through system integration) to FISA/FMS for validation. Outreach is often conducted long after the hearing.

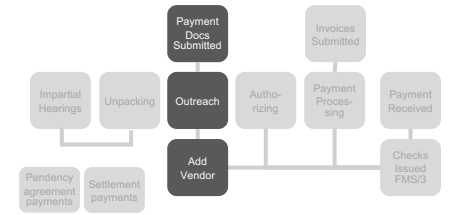


Implications

The payee registration process (Add Vendor) crosses DOE organizational divisions as well as City agencies. It is based on the City's payment policy.

Outreach conducted after the hearing makes the gathering of documentation much more difficult.

Payment Orders | Centralize IU Outreach



Near-term A5-NT See A4-NT.

Long-term A5-LT See A4-LT. Once improved document management capabilities are in place, Outreach responsibilities for the IU should decrease substantially.

Prior Finding

A-5 “Outreach” occurs when the Authorizer notices paperwork is missing (which is required in order to authorize) or when services have not been provided. The Implementation Unit does not have a function or role dedicated to outreach. In its current state, it is simply an informal, ad hoc duty of the authorizing individual. It is reactive, email-based, time-consuming and necessary due to the lack of central systems through which documentation is submitted.

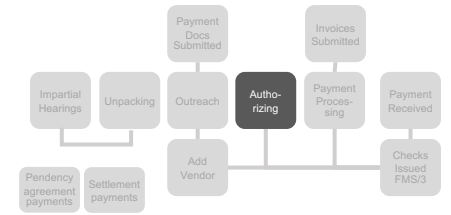


Implications

Outreach is conducted in individualistic fashion, with one person trying to gather information from another. It is not centralized in any process or case management sense.



Payment Orders | Conditions of Payment



Near-term A6-NT Some reimbursement documentation needed of parents and providers should be required, but not as a condition of payment. In other words, proof of payment (e.g.) would be collected in the same manner it is now. Payments should be made upon calculation or confirmation of the payment amount and the payee being registered with the City. Clear messaging should be developed to firmly convey that all payees are subject to audit by federal/state/City investigators. See accompanying spreadsheet to this report – *LV Recommendations v03282023.x/s* -- worksheet #3 (payment docs required) for recommendations on specific documents.

Long-term A6-LT Conduct regular audits into payments, as to be determined.

Prior Finding

A-6 Payment documentation (e.g. proof of payment) must be on file in DAITS to authorize the payment. When this documentation is not captured at the hearing, it must be tracked down (e.g., from parents) in ad hoc manner through correspondence (typically email), termed "outreach," and uploaded to DAITS before payment can be authorized.

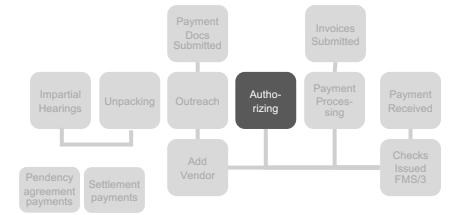


Implications

Outreach is a significant level of effort in Authorizers' daily work. See previous finding, A-5.



Payment Orders | Payment Staff



Near-term **A6b-NT** See Staffing section.

Long-term **A6b-LT** See Staffing section.

Prior Finding

A-6b As of 2/23/2022, there are 7 Authorizers on staff to process payments, and 5 openings for the role. It was conveyed that the average caseload is 2,100 action items per Authorizer, and the goal is a minimum of 12 per day.

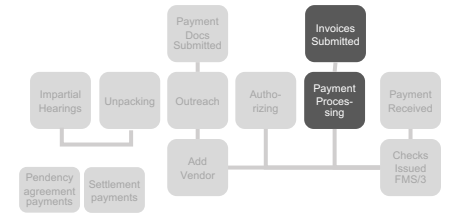


Implications

Adding new staff as a Long-term strategy is not the way to address the core problem of broken processes, misaligned roles and inadequate tools. As a Near-term strategy, it might be appropriate until the backlog is remediated and/or processes and tools can be re-engineered.



Payment Orders | Digital Invoicing (1 of 3)



Near-term A7-NT Assess ability of the DOE to transition invoices for ordered services to the NYC Vendor Portal system and to pay providers immediately upon timesheet submission (as per other City, NYC special education processes). Conduct user research to understand invoicing pain points and design a solution.

Long-term A7-LT Evaluate scenarios and build/procure a mobile app by which providers can enter their hours on their phone upon providing the service, (i.e., a timesheet). (Medicare providers follow a process like this). A traditional “invoice” would no longer be necessary.

Prior Finding

A-7 Invoices are paper-based and until the pandemic were physically mailed to the IU. The pandemic required the conversion from paper to electronic communications for submissions of invoices. This led to a slightly easier submission process, but an exponential increase in electronic communications for IU staff, (without any system to manage or centralize the information).

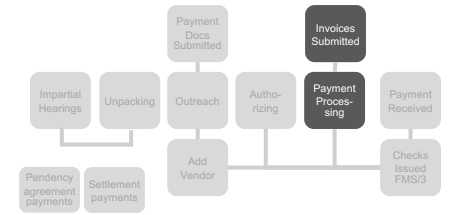


Implications

This is still a manual and reactive process. It results in longer processing times, heavy data entry upon receipt (which creates a backlog and need for more staff), and errors. Electronic correspondence seems to create a false expectation that all orders and payments will be implemented faster than before.



Payment Orders | Digital Invoicing (2 of 3)



Near-term A8-NT See A7-NT. New invoicing process and tool will be designed to streamline invoice approval process.

Long-term A8-LT See A7-LT. New invoicing process and tool will be designed to streamline invoice approval process.

Prior Finding

A-8 Invoices must be reviewed and manually entered (data entry) into the Impartial Hearings Financial (IHF) system. They require pre-existing knowledge of the types of services and that staff individually assess if the invoice is for the appropriate services ordered.

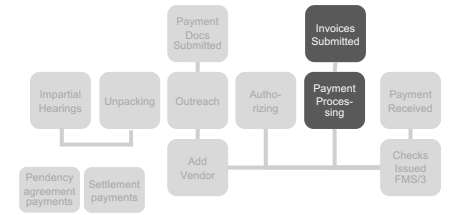


Implications

Payment Processing is another area in which a backlog has built up due to higher volume and time/effort for data entry.



Payment Orders | Digital Invoicing (3 of 3)



Near-term **A9-NT** See A7-NT and A6b-NT.

Long-term **A9-LT** See A7-LT.

Prior Finding

A-9 Invoicing for provided services is still a paper-based process. Invoices for services ordered must be filled out and signed by the provider and the parent (or designee) and submitted to the DOE. Invoices received must then be individually and manually data entered into FAMIS/IHF and approved for payment.

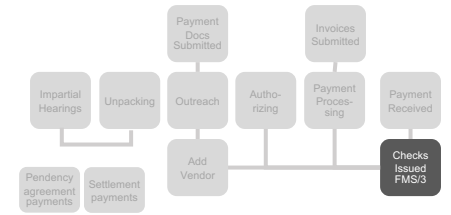


Implications

This is a highly inefficient business process that should be digitized to speed processing times and reduce manual effort.



Payment Orders | Cross Agency Process



Near-term **A10-NT** No recommendation.

Long-term **A10-LT** No recommendation.

Prior Finding

A-10 FAMIS payment requests are integrated with the City's FMS/3 in real-time from FAMIS. FMS/3 processes the request the same day it receives it, running an automated budgetary (cash management) check and verifies the vendor is on file with the City.

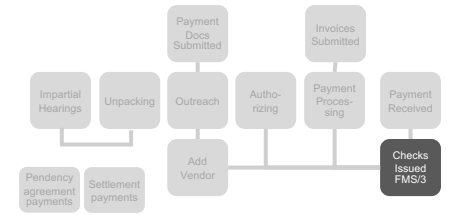


Implications

FISA considers the payment requests “pre-approved,” and performs no manual check or approval. Checks and direct deposits are scheduled to be sent as soon as they pass the above checks and are posted to the ledger, (automated; nightly batch).



Payment Orders | Vendor/City Status



Near-term **A11-NT** No recommendation

Long-term **A11-LT** No recommendation

Prior Finding

A-11 If a vendor's status has changed, such as a recent lien, a notification from FMS/3 is automatically sent back to DOE notifying of the discrepancy.

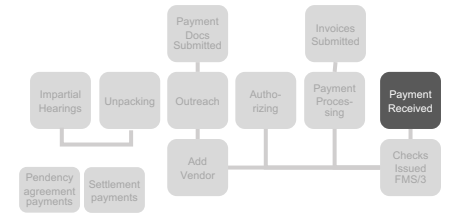


Implications

Although the IU's process requires a TIN when authorizing, there is no systematic way to know if the vendor's status with the City has changed, (e.g. a lien, invalid TIN)



Payment Orders | Timelier Payments



Near-term **A12-NT** See 1-NT.

Long-term **A12-LT** See 1-LT.

Prior Finding

A-12 All payees interviewed report irregular and heavily delayed payments.

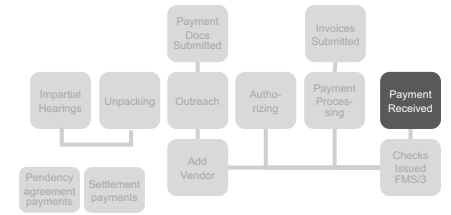


Implications

Many schools and providers are financially impacted by the delays having to scale back services to NYC DOE, build contingency funds, request emergency funding, etc. This also often causes providers to increase their rates to compensate for the fact that DOE is always delayed in making payments.



Payment Orders | Payment Transparency



Near-term **A13-NT** See 1-NT.

Long-term **A13-LT** See 1-LT.

Prior Finding

A-13 All payees report that submitting paperwork and invoices results in no reply or any acknowledgement by any DOE staff or system, (until a check is eventually received). Several interviewees referred to it as a “black hole.”

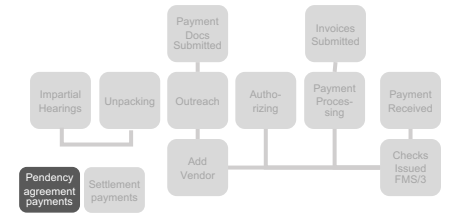


Implications

Relationships with providers are damaged. Trust in the NYC DOE as a responsible institution is essentially non-existent among stakeholders.



Payment Orders | Pendency Payments



Near-term **X1-NT** No recommendation.

Long-term **X1-LT** No recommendation.

Prior Finding

X-1 DOE has changed from requiring orders on pendency to use of pendency agreements where pendency is not disputed. Pendency Agreement payments are processed by the IU via DAITS, even though they are not typically ordered by an Impartial Hearing Officer. (Pendency Order payments follow the same process as other payment orders.)

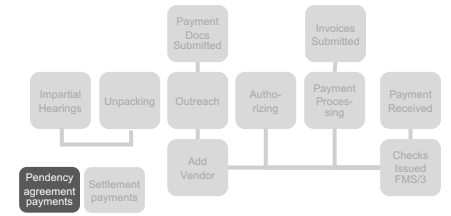


Implications

DOE should explore if this process can be simplified and automated to ease the volume of cases the IU must process.



Payment Orders | Pendency Agreements



Near-term **X2-NT** No recommendation

Long-term **X2-LT** No recommendation

Prior Finding

X-2 Pendency Agreement payments for tuition are made in increments (half up front) - there is no scheduling of payments so all increments need to be individually authorized.

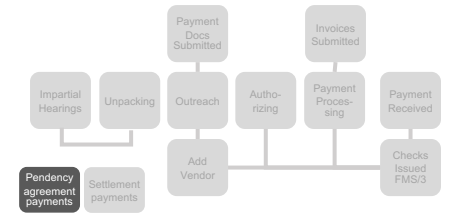


Implications

There is an opportunity to lower the volume of authorizations by scheduling payments that must be processed by the implementation unit.



Payment Orders | Invoicing



Near-term **X3-NT** See A7-NT

Long-term **X3-LT** See A7-LT

Prior Finding

X-3 Pendency payments for services are dependent on submission of invoices by vendors after the provision of services, and so cannot be scheduled. Vendors can submit invoices per their own desired frequency and the process is still paper-based.

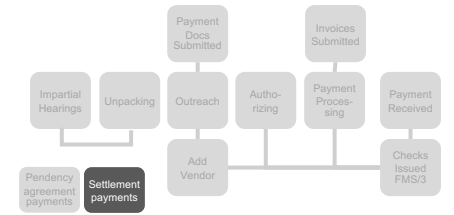


Implications

There is an opportunity to standardize (automate) the vendor invoice submission process to process these payments for services more efficiently.



Payment Orders | Connect to Settlements



Near-term X4-NT (a) Develop a systems-generated notification (or equivalent) to inform the Implementation Unit (Accounts Specialists, Payment Specialists) that OGC/SEU has settled a case where payments are being distributed from an order. Define business and technical requirements to do so. (b) Develop a process and service for schools to electronically refund overpayments that happen due to this disconnect.

Long-term X4-LT Build the notification process and system integration defined in near-term recommendation.

Prior Finding

X-4 OGC authorizes settlement payments in FAMIS which are processed by DFO. In the IU, the Authorizer (IU) of a pendency agreement may not see that the case has been settled and authorize the pendency payment, resulting in overpayment. This is especially challenging with a backlog of orders/pendency agreements (i.e. pendency payments are issued after settlement payments due to the backlog).

Implications

There is not a clear or transparent way for IU staff to be notified of a settlement, resulting in a disconnected process that continually results in errors (overpayments) which must be rectified. The systems (DAITS, FAMIS, SESIS) are not integrated in such a way that all users are aware of the settlement and lacks appropriate transparency that would permit smoother operations.

Overall Findings

Implementing
Payment Orders
and Action Items

Implementing
Service Orders
and Action Items

Staffing Needs of
the DOE
Implementation
Unit

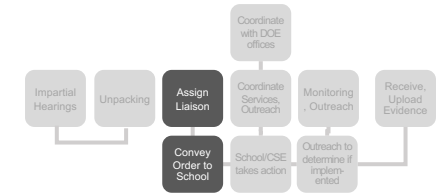
DAITS and
Relevant Systems

Implementing
Orders & Action
Items Outstanding
35+ Days

Monitoring
Processes &
Standards for
Compliance

DOE's Processes for Implementing Service Orders and Action Items

Service Orders | Communicating Orders



Near-term B1-NT (a) Liaisons (or IMs) should communicate all service orders to the schools, (b) The IU should assign a full-time resource to flag incoming orders deemed timely and high priority, (e.g., D75). Flagged orders could then be routed to schools in a timelier manner.

Long-term B1-LT See 4-LT. The structure of orders and action items will enable the IU to view incoming orders by type/category/deadline as they are entered into the system and triage/route them accordingly.

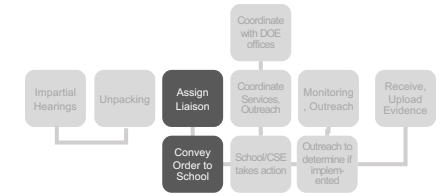
Prior Finding

B-1 Implementation Liaisons are assigned an action item (in DAITS), and then notified of the incoming order via email. They are provided instructions about documentation needed, requiring them to convey the Order to the school. Due to the current backlog, these assignments are often coming after the child needs services, (e.g. a nurse is needed for the child within days, but the Order backlogged and not unpacked into DAITS for months so the assignment does not come to the Liaison for months).

Implications

Implementation Liaisons act as the intermediary and messenger between the Implementation Unit and the school as the action item is carried out, (i.e., word of mouth). Automation of this process and integration of systems would greatly improve the Liaisons' process, and transparency overall.

Service Orders | Tracking Orders



Near-term B2-NT Define data/system requirements for monitoring incoming, and tracking the ongoing implementation of, orders comprised of service action item(s). Structured input by the hearing officer issuing the order should include deadline/due date types of input fields. See 4-LT for data.

Long-term B2-LT see B1-LT and 6-LT for long-term data/system recommendations.

Prior Finding

B-2 There is no automated process in DAITS notifying the users of key due dates approaching. Users must look for cases where they think due dates are approaching. The Implementation Managers attempt to monitor the status, among their other duties.

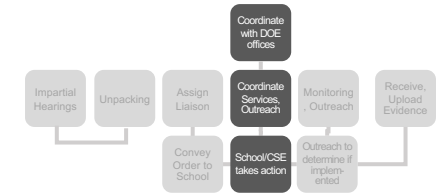


Implications

At the time of assigning a liaison (unpacking), Implementation Managers also assign themselves a 'monitoring item' in DAITS to keep track of service action items in process. But there are no known notifications or reports for tracking due dates/compliance (just DAITS).



Service Orders | Service Order Coordination



Near-term B3-NT Using the customer support function (1-NT), (a) build a formal network structure for the Implementation Manager (IM) role to serve as the point-of-contact and coordinate service action items across DOE offices, schools, attorneys and parents, (see next page). (b) Add additional IM staff to distribute caseloads, freeing up time for the Implementation Managers to monitor service action items (not just unpack). See C4-NT for hiring recommendation and next page for IM POC concept.

Long-term B3-LT Launch the process of monitoring and coordinating service action items, as defined above.

Prior Finding

B-3 The Implementation Unit is responsible for ensuring implementation of all action items — Implementation Liaisons are responsible for implementing Service Action Items at the school level, (per LV guidelines). As a matter of roles, the Implementation Unit and/or CSE coordinate services that must be arranged by internal offices (e.g., Office of Pupil Transportation) and the Implementation Liaisons ensure action is taken by the school or with their CSE team, (e.g. scheduling an IEP meeting).



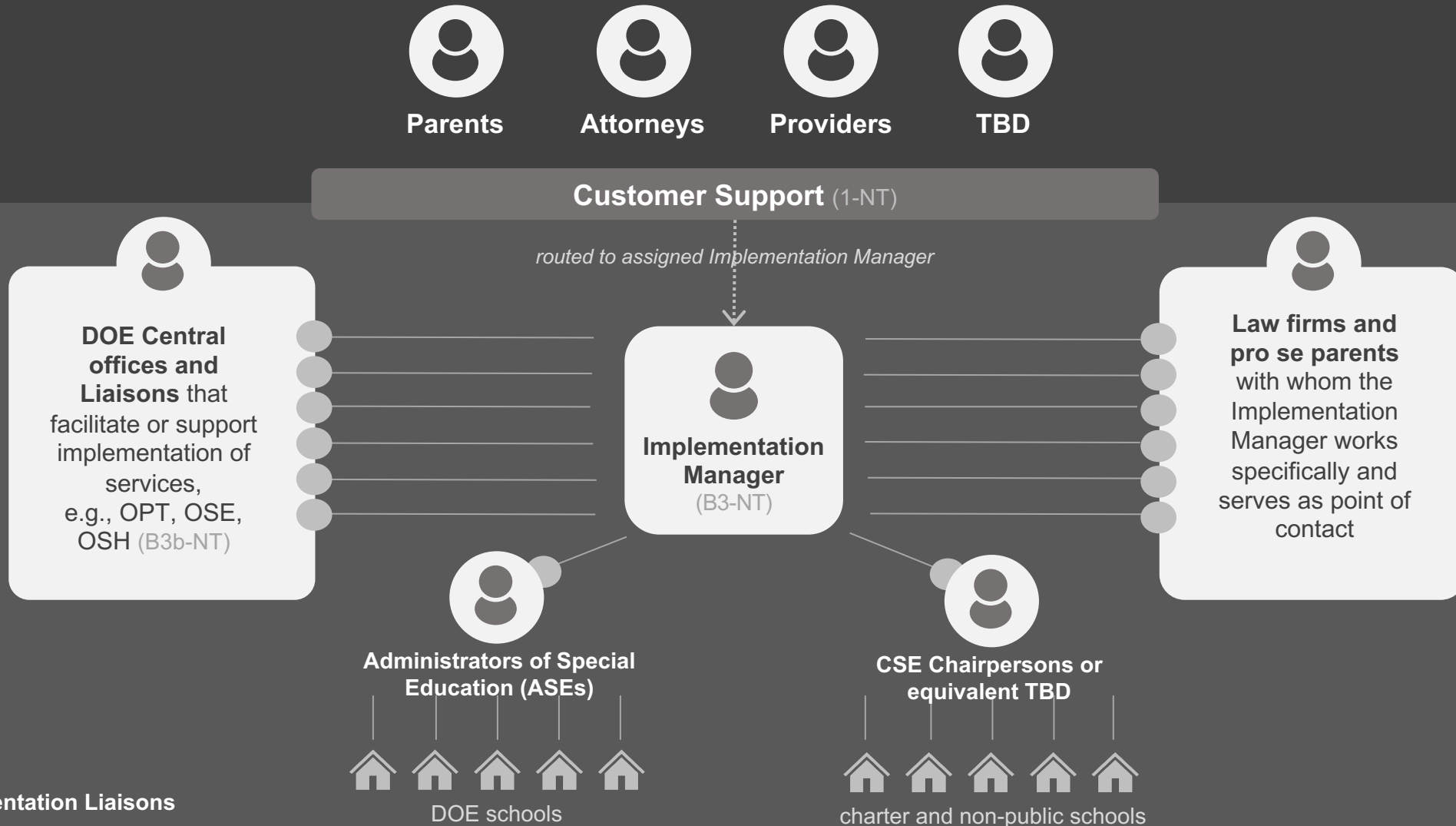
Implications

The Implementation Unit does not have a full-time role for implementing service orders as they do with payment orders. Implementation Managers coordinate some services and follow up with Liaisons via ‘Monitoring Items,’ as time permits.

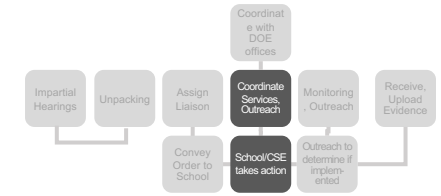


Service Orders | Service Order Coordination

Inquiries from various stakeholders should be channeled through a common point of entry where they can be directed to the Implementation Manager with knowledge of the case. [Recommendations B3-NT, B3b-NT, 1-NT]



Service Orders | Establish Liaison Role



Near-term B3b-NT Formally designate Implementation Liaisons in all Districts and relevant Central offices (e.g., OPT, OSH, OSE) to act as points-of-contact in their respective areas for Implementation Managers to facilitate the arrangement of the ordered service(s). Establish a process to transfer the role to other staff when needed, (i.e. mitigate turnover). Many Liaisons are already in place, even if informally. (See 10d-NT for OPT)

Long-term B3b-LT Establish ongoing communications with Liaisons as a community, (e.g., newsletter). Share operating procedures and training materials to standardize Liaison practices.

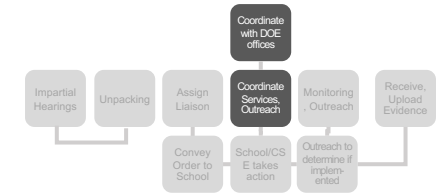
Prior Finding

B-3b The role of Implementation Liaison coordinates action items for all types of schools (i.e. either at the CSEs or for public schools). In both instances, the designated Liaison is notified via email (from DAITS) that a service has been ordered and the individual begins to coordinate arrangement of the service, first looking to their own staff and then to outside providers. The process in all cases (public and CSE) is primarily based on exchanges of phone calls and emails (i.e. not a formalized, documented “process”)

Implications

A lack of process, especially lack of a documented process(es), leads to inefficiency, confusion, increased time and effort, and potentially errors or omissions. This finding advances other observations that the processes are facilitated by individuals continually reaching out to those who will listen.

Service Orders | Establish Liaison Role



Near-term B3c-NT See B3b-NT. Also establish an escalation process when the Liaison is unavailable or unable to resolve a particular issue. Escalation roles must be documented for each Central office and District and must be in executive role to effectuate solution, (e.g., Deputy Chancellor, Superintendent).

Long-term B3c-LT See B3b-LT

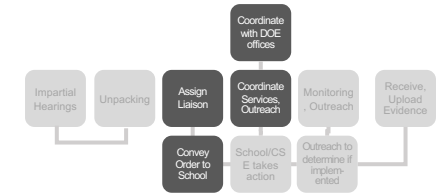
Prior Finding

B-3c Service Orders arranged by DOE central offices, (such as transportation), follow a similar high-level process as the Implementation Liaison process for other service orders (both CSE and public schools): (1) the service action item is created; (2) a Liaison or point of contact is identified in the respective office; (3) emails are exchanged among one or several offices; (4) services are arranged or an alternative is identified, (primarily over email or phone calls); and (5) evidence is ultimately uploaded to DAITS.

Implications

Turnover in DOE central offices poses a significant risk to the efficiency of this process and the implementation of certain services. Because the process is based on individuals (and not roles or an automated workflow), obstacles present themselves at the outset of implementation when no one knows to whom to assign the action item, (or who to call).

Service Orders | Notify Parents



Near-term B3d-NT Define and build an automated service to generate emails to parents and attorneys at key milestones in the administrative workflow, such as when an Implementation Manager approves the composition of the order, (i.e., it is unpacked) or a payment action item has been authorized. See B1-NT.

Long-term B3d-LT See B1-LT.

Prior Finding

B-3d The backlog in the process of data entry / approving orders may result in a delay in notifying the Liaison of the order. For example, an order is issued for the student to be placed in a school immediately with a need for nursing service; the student arrives, however, the order from DAITS has not been entered and received yet by the Liaison; therefore, the need for nursing services has not yet been communicated to the school.



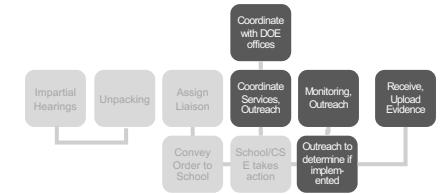
Implications

Students and parents expect services will be delivered immediately per the order. When they arrive and the needed support has not been arranged, (e.g. nurse not available), confusion and frustration ensue.

Some Implementation Liaisons have taken to reviewing orders in the Impartial Hearing System as they are issued to avoid this scenario.



Service Orders | Shared Documentation



Near-term **B4-NT** See B6-NT.

Long-term **B4-LT** See B6-LT.

Prior Finding

B-4 Implementation Liaisons have to use both SESIS and DAITS to gather evidence of implementation; and often upload documents from SESIS into DAITS.

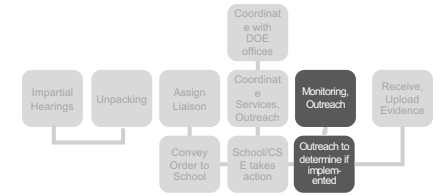


Implications

The two systems are not synchronized, integrated or connected in any way. If they were, gathering of evidence (and the outreach needed to do so) might be rendered moot by simply monitoring for the necessary evidence in SESIS.



Service Orders | Gathering Evidence



Near-term **B5-NT** See B6-NT.

Long-term **B5-LT** See B6-LT.

Prior Finding

B-5 As opposed to a workflow system, email is the system used to gather evidence of implementation of service action items, including tracking details of current status, key documents needed, key documents collected, etc. Evidence of implementation is gathered through this correspondence by Liaisons and Implementation Managers The Implementation Liaison’s primary role is to conduct outreach, (e.g., they may need to contact the parent or work with the school to fulfill an action item).

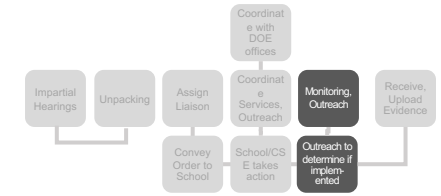


Implications

NYC DOE lacks a workflow system to facilitate the service action item process and centralize documentation.



Service Orders | Gathering evidence



Near-term B6-NT Share common documentation needed in due process and in special education overall, such as Related Services Authorizations (RSAs), evaluations, IEP Meeting notice, etc. across systems. Currently, such documents must reside in both systems (SEGIS and DAITS). Define common documentation/evidence and explore how to share more efficiently across processes.

Long-term B6-LT See A1-LT and A4-LT. Build the necessary document management functionality into the new special education data system to share documents across special ed processes, (as defined in B6-NT).

Prior Finding

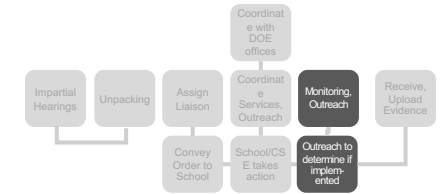
B-6 The Implementation Liaison data-gathering process is manual and reactive. Once gathered via email, the Implementation Liaison or Implementation Manager will manually upload the necessary documentation to DAITS (showing the action has been completed; implemented).



Implications

All relevant email correspondence and attachments (for all service action items) are manually uploaded to DAITS where they serve as evidence of implementation. This leaves room for human error (e.g., incorrect documentation).

Service Orders | Action Item Monitoring



Near-term **B7-NT** Recommendation in future report.

Long-term **B7-LT** Recommendation in future report.

Prior Finding

B-7 DAITS is inconsistently used by Liaisons outside the IU for monitoring their action items. Some Implementation Liaisons use DAITS to maintain their list of action items, and some maintain their own spreadsheet

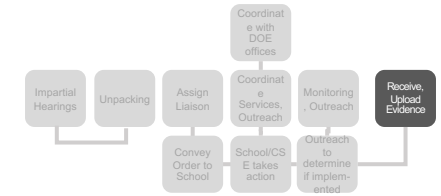


Implications

There is not a standard way Liaisons monitor the status of their assigned action items. This leads to inconsistent and varied monitoring operations.



Service Orders | Gathering of Evidence



Near-term **B8-NT** See D9-NT, A1-NT and B6-NT.

Long-term **B8-LT** See D9-LT, A1-LT and B6-LT.

Prior Finding

B-8 The Implementation Liaison data-gathering process is manual and reactive. Once gathered via email, the Implementation Liaison will manually upload the necessary documentation to DAITS (showing the action has been completed; implemented). This is essentially redundant with SESIS because the systems/processes are not linked.

Implications

All relevant email correspondence and attachments (for all service action items) must be manually uploaded to DAITS where they serve as evidence of implementation

Overall Findings

Implementing
Payment Orders
and Action Items

Implementing
Service Orders
and Action Items

Staffing Needs of
the DOE
Implementation
Unit

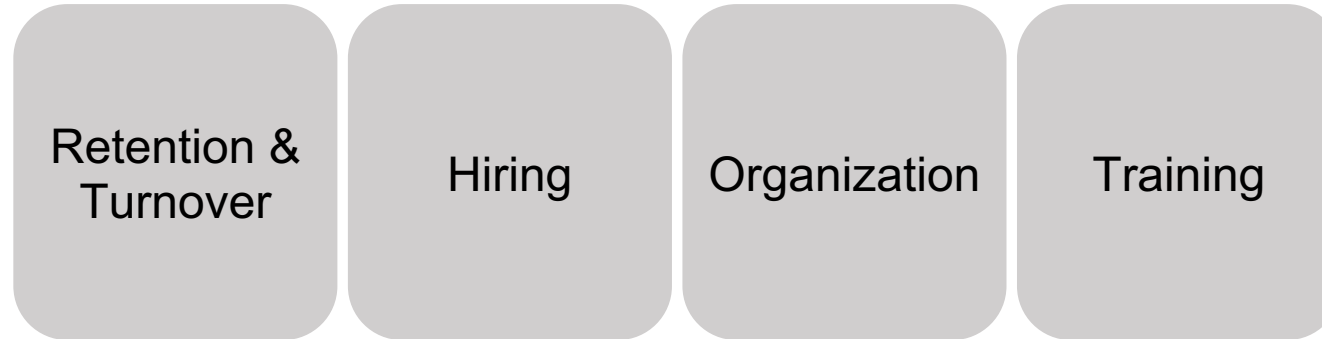
DAITS and
Relevant Systems

Implementing
Orders & Action
Items Outstanding
35+ Days

Monitoring
Processes &
Standards for
Compliance

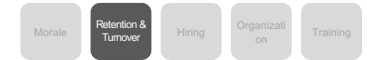
Staffing Needs of the DOE Implementation Unit

Staffing of the Implementation Unit



The above categories of talent and human resources were reviewed to inform the following findings related to the staffing of the Implementation Unit.

Staffing | Improve Retention



Near-term C2-NT Establish competitive salaries as stated in C3-NT. Provide all administrative staff who directly support NYC special education students with the option to work from home, indefinitely. This would include DOE attorneys.

Long-term C2-LT Provide opportunities to staff that promote career progression, (e.g. goal-setting, professional development tracks, regular meetings with line manager, demonstrated leadership and rewarded accordingly (performance)).

Prior Finding

C-2 Recently, the Implementation Unit has had a high number of staff leave/quit, consultants' P.O.s expire, staff reassigned (6), or staff redeployed (e.g. to a school, due to pandemic).



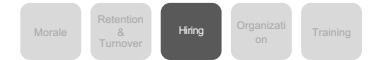
Implications



This is highly disruptive to Implementation Unit operations and negatively impacts the backlog of payments.

This requires increasing amounts of time, effort spent on reviewing candidates CVs, interviews, hiring, training, etc. by Implementation Unit leadership.

Staffing | Hiring



Near-term C3-NT See C2-NT. (a) Add a part-time role supporting IU hiring practices, (see Appendix I). (b) Implementation Unit (IU) and DOE HR staff should form a committee to coordinate (weekly, track progress) and address issues of recruiting and salary disparities. (c) Establish competitive salary ranges for all existing and future positions in the Implementation Unit.

Long-term C3-LT Adapt and sustain competitive salary ranges for hearings staff, IU staff, attorneys and related services staff.

Prior Finding

C-3 Hiring has been an immense challenge for the Implementation Unit due to a variety of factors, such as (a) the competitive hiring process of the DOE is constrained by archaic rules (e.g. rankings, interview protocols (2 questions), "1 in 3" rule); (b) uncompetitive salaries offered to candidates, (c) civil service regulations severely limit the candidate pool.



Implications



There have been several unfilled positions for 1+ year, (e.g., Associate Director). 20 positions just approved, which will be a huge challenge given hiring constraints. Qualified candidates cannot apply to positions in most cases if they are not members of the civil service (competitive class). IU leadership is presented with limited or no qualified candidates through the competitive civil service hiring process. Due to the depth of expertise needed, along with a lack of automation and workflow (which would simplify the process), DOE must rely on the limited external candidate pool of individuals with the requisite knowledge of NYC special ed law.

Staffing | Hiring



Near-term C4-NT As per organizational restructuring (C5-NT, Appendix I), develop recruitment and hiring strategy for new staff needed. Continue to recruit and hire Implementation Managers to address backlog.

Long-term C4-LT As per organizational expansion (see Appendix I), develop recruitment and hiring strategy for new staff needed.

Prior Finding

C-4 Most interviewees believe that additional staffing is the answer to the current backlog and issues with volume.



Implications

Additional staffing is a short-term solution that does not get at the root of the problem, inefficient processes and insufficient enabling technologies to support the IU's work.



Staffing | Organization



Near-term C5-NT Reorganize the Implementation Unit to report to the OGC. Establish an organizational structure for the Implementation Unit based on teams that can more easily collaborate. See Appendix I for recommended organizational structure of the Implementation Unit.

Long-term C5-LT Periodically evaluate the organizational structure of the Implementation Unit to align with future process improvements and broader DOE organizational changes.

Prior Finding

C-5 The Implementation Unit is not organized as a team, but rather operates as individuals performing functions in silos.



Implications

This does not create ideal conditions (trust, collaboration) for knowledge sharing, coordination and communications (internal and external).



Staffing | Professional Development (PD)



Near-term C6-NT Recruit and hire (or reassign) a resource to plan, develop and deliver training materials for Implementation Unit and OGC staff (based on future state processes). Identify a part-time resource to create a training plan, develop materials, and deliver training pertinent to the implementation of orders.

Long-term C6-LT Develop a continual process of updating training materials to reflect changing policies and business rules.

Prior Finding

C-6 Training is conducted primarily through experience and coaching. There is not a formal Training program for the LV work, nor any recent training materials.



Implications

Given the complexity of the processes, a lack of adequate training/program leads to a longer onboarding process for staff.

Training is complicated by the existing disjointed and undocumented processes.



Overall Findings

Implementing
Payment Orders
and Action Items

Implementing
Service Orders
and Action Items

Staffing Needs of
the DOE
Implementation
Unit

**DAITS and
Relevant Systems**

Implementing
Orders & Action
Items Outstanding
35+ Days

Monitoring
Processes &
Standards for
Compliance

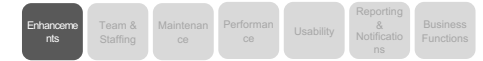
DAITS and Relevant Systems

DAITS and Relevant Systems



The above categories regarding the management and life cycle of information systems were reviewed to inform the following findings related to DAITS and relevant systems.

Technology | Enhancements



Near-term D1-NT Inventory all functional issues of DAITS that impede the implementation workflow (See Appendix IV for list to be prioritized). Prioritize enhancements and assign Business Analysts (or equivalent) to elaborate requirements.

Long-term D1-LT Assign technical resources to build the enhancements identified in the near-term recommendation. Develop, test and release subsequent DAITS enhancements.

Prior Finding

D-1 DAITS is a custom application built over a decade ago to support the Implementation Unit, and has not been significantly enhanced since, (i.e., no product life cycle processes), despite requests.

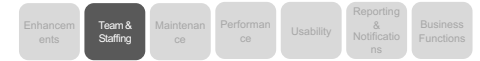


Implications

A lack of enhancements means it has not kept up with the business and workflow demands of the Implementation Unit.

Built over 10 years ago on an older development framework (.NET 3.5) means future challenges and obstacles to leveraging more modern web-based technologies, (e.g. cloud, analytics, mobile). It will not run on modern web browsers, like Chrome and Firefox.

Technology | Team & Staffing



Near-term D2-NT No recommendation. DAITS will eventually be replaced. See D1-NT and LT.

Long-term D2-LT No recommendation.

Prior Finding

D-2 DOE has not prioritized the resources needed to maintain DAITS over the years. DAITS has been neglected from a resource perspective for years (no funds or staff, despite requests). There has been no technical/development team or staff dedicated to DAITS.



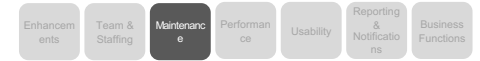
Implications



There is not an existing and dedicated DAITS development team prepared to make any necessary upgrades.

Institutional knowledge of the system's technical architecture and business logic resides with a single DOE staff person who is currently engaged full-time on several other DOE systems teams.

Technology | DAITS Maintenance



Near-term D3-NT Investigate and rectify DAITS performance issues – (1) system crashes, (2) system outages, (3) system timeouts – as soon as possible.

Long-term D3-LT see D1-LT

Prior Finding

D-3 DAITS is mired in technical debt, which is the effect of cutting corners on maintenance and investments, (e.g., outdated user interface, runs on an unsupported web browser).



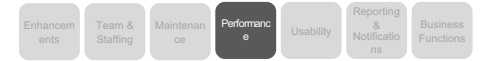
Implications



Internet Explorer is no longer supported by Microsoft which means it will cease to receive security updates, potentially opening the DOE to vulnerabilities. "Implementation Unit staff have trouble accessing IE because DOE IT (DIIT) no longer supports the outdated browser (and keeps deleting it off their operating systems).

The estimate to modernize DAITS and bring it up to a fully functioning, web-based application is significant, (1+ yrs, 1+ FTEs); i.e., just maintenance, not enhanced functionality.

Technology | System Performance



Near-term **D3-NT** see D1-NT

Long-term **D3-LT** see D1-LT

Prior Finding

D-4 DAITS regularly crashes (causing the user to restart their work), times out (after seconds, causing the user to restart their work), and is generally slow to process data.



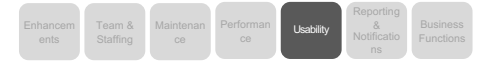
Implications



The system is counterproductive, at best. Trust has been eroded, and it is not viewed as a reliable system by the user community.

The system's performance causes extreme frustration to the user community, results in lost work (rework), and squanders hundreds (if not thousands) of hours in lost productivity annually.

Technology | DAITS Usability



Near-term D5-NT See D1-NT

Long-term D5-LT Continue to conduct ongoing user research on LV and due process functions in efforts to modernize and redesign NYC DOE due process functions and align them with (migrate to) the special education system (SEDMS).

Prior Finding

D-5 DAITS was designed over 10 years ago and has not been redesigned or enhanced since. This, not surprisingly, leads to an outdated user interface (UI), a lack of common UI standards, (e.g. selecting multiple documents upon upload), and is generally inefficient at facilitating the IU's processes of the present day. See Appendix IV for sample screenshots.



Implications

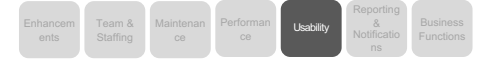


Most users are frustrated with DAITS.

DAITS does not reflect the IU processes as they've evolved over the last decade.

The system's poor usability adds to the time/effort needed to process Orders.

Technology | General Usability



Near-term **D6-NT** see D1-NT.

Long-term **D6-LT** see D1-LT and D5-LT.

Prior Finding

D-6 DAITS often requires that users remember detailed information from a previous screen, defying a basic usability principle.

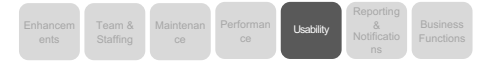


Implications

This often requires users to have two windows open to be able to retrieve necessary information and cut and paste it from screen to screen. This is a significant obstacle to a usable and efficient system.



Technology | Payment Calculations



Near-term **D7-NT** see D1-NT.

Long-term **D7-LT** see D5-LT.

Prior Finding

D-7 DAITS requires that users manually calculate pro-rated amounts in authorizing prospective or pendency payments. Users are forced to use a desk calculator to determine the appropriate payment amount.

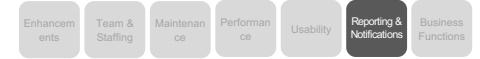


Implications

A web-based application would ideally have this logic and ability to calculate such payment amounts built into the functionality of the system. The current system leads to longer processing times and the potential for error.



Technology | Reporting & Notifications



Near-term **D8-NT** See 2-NT.

Long-term **D8-LT** See 2-LT.

Prior Finding

D-8 DAITS lacks useful reporting features and notifications commonly expected of web-based applications, which would be very helpful in managing daily IU operations. For example, the system does not display a list of incoming orders (i.e., those that came in the previous day).



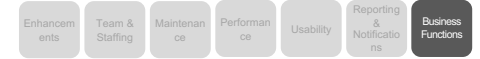
Implications



IU staff must rely on spreadsheets and Cognos reports generated daily by DIIT to monitor new orders and assign them to Implementation Managers.

Another example is neither DAITS nor FAMIS notifies IU leadership of final approval of a payment order needed in FAMIS. The current protocol is to review the Cognos report for pending approvals and then to search for the pay order in FAMIS.

Technology | Due Process Data System



Near-term D9-NT Explore Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solutions specializing in case management (or equivalent) and assess fits and gaps. Requirements should include the ability to capture all due process documentation pertinent to student/case(s) in a single, central application and user interface (UI). This will facilitate and streamline multiple special education and DOE/legal/reporting operations. See A4-LT and A1-NT.

Long-term D9-LT See D5-LT and A4-LT.

Prior Finding

D-9 DAITS and FAMIS contain very detailed business rules, calculations, and required functionality of NYC/Due Process/LV, which are almost certainly not inherent to any existing category of software product ("off the shelf").



Implications

Developing a new system to replace DAITS and quickly deploying it is unfortunately not a realistic scenario to remedying the current situation.

The move to a case management process might be facilitated by a CRM system, but would require a change of DOE/IU business processes/rules.



Overall Findings

Implementing
Payment Orders
and Action Items

Implementing
Service Orders
and Action Items

Staffing Needs of
the DOE
Implementation
Unit

DAITS and
Relevant Systems

Implementing
Orders & Action
Items Outstanding
35+ Days

Monitoring
Processes &
Standards for
Compliance

Implementing Orders & Action Items Outstanding 35+ Days

Orders Outstanding 35+ Days



Near-term E1-NT Assign a small team of IU resources/Implementation Managers (2-3) to inventory and investigate the cases that are 35+ days past the date of the order. Identify solutions to obstacles and barriers to implementation (via the Steering Team, as needed), and expedite cases accordingly.

Long-term E1-LT Continue the work in the near-term recommendation until such time as orders are consistently being implemented within the compliance deadline.

Prior Finding

E-1 The DOE handles all cases and students the same and in the sequence in which Orders are received. As a result, there are no DOE processes specifically for implementing Orders and Action Items beyond the 35-day threshold.



Implications

There is no fast track or alternative workflow to facilitate outstanding orders, orders and action items beyond the 35-day threshold are not treated differently than any other case.



Orders Outstanding 35+ Days



Near-term E2-NT No specific recommendation. Many recommendations in this report address the topic of streamlined and automated approvals/workflows aimed at faster implementation of Orders.

Long-term E2-LT No specific recommendation. Many recommendations in this report address the topic of streamlined and automated approvals/workflows aimed at faster implementation of Orders.

Prior Finding

E-2 The manual and decentralized processes result in a time-consuming workflow (even for relatively simple orders), along with increasing volume, which results in orders not being implemented in a timely manner.



Implications

If the process (especially for payments) continues to employ a multi-stage approval process across various Divisions and NYC agencies that do not talk to each other, the process will always take more than 35 days.



Overall Findings

Implementing
Payment Orders
and Action Items

Implementing
Service Orders
and Action Items

Staffing Needs of
the DOE
Implementation
Unit

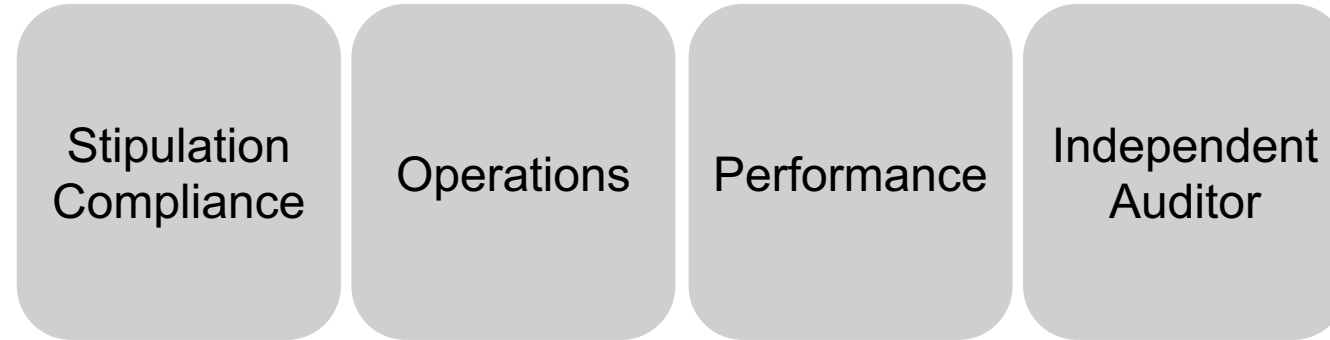
DAITS and
Relevant Systems

Implementing
Orders & Action
Items Outstanding
35+ Days

Monitoring
Processes &
Standards for
Compliance

Monitoring Processes & Standards for Compliance

Monitoring Processes & Standards for Compliance



The above categories regarding the DOE's processes for monitoring LV compliance and their own performance were reviewed to inform the following findings.

Monitoring Processes



Near-term F1-NT Define a role of Data Analyst within the Due Process Systems and Analytics Office to build capacity for data integrity and measure KPIs (2-NT). See additional details on roles and proposed organization chart in Appendix I.

Long-term F1-LT Leverage new data made accessible by future state special education and due process data system to grow and mature analytics capabilities.

Prior Finding

F-1 The Stipulation puts ownership of monitoring for compliance on the independent auditor and puts none on the NYC DOE (other than providing the data to the IA). As a result, NYC DOE has not historically employed its own internal resources in monitoring for compliance specifically with LV. On a case-by-case basis, Implementation Managers monitor for service compliance, but current volume makes this impractical and highly inconsistent.



Implications

The DOE does not have any people, processes or tools dedicated to monitoring outstanding action items and/or LV compliance. The DOE has inadequate tools and data to report the total/current volume of orders and payment items.



Monitoring Processes

Near-term F2-NT For IU processes, analyze the types of action items (and/or combinations of action items) that require the greatest levels of effort to process, (and at different stages of the workflow), as well as those most likely to contribute to backlog.

Long-term F2-LT See F1-LT.

Prior Finding

F-2 The Implementation Unit monitors data on incoming orders daily (via a Cognos report; outside of DAITS) as a means of assigning Orders to Implementation Managers, but, due to system/data constraints, cannot proactively monitor outstanding orders (35+ days), calculate the backlog volume, or generally measure LV compliance (the IA's role).

Implications

There is a lack of authoritative data on LV compliance and DOE progress because a formal monitoring process has not been established by DOE. DOE does not know the number, aging, or time to completion of total outstanding orders at any given time.

Monitoring Processes



Near-term F3-NT No recommendation. This is an area to explore after other process enhancements have been rolled out.

Long-term F3-LT TBD

Prior Finding

F-3 The Implementation Unit recently (in 2021) started monitoring the caseloads and performance of Authorizers (Payment Specialists), but has not historically had a tool or process to monitor performance of staff or the Implementation Unit overall.



Implications

Generally, the DOE does not monitor performance of IU staff or the goals of the Implementation Unit (outside the IA/Stipulation)..



Monitoring Processes



Near-term **F4-NT** No recommendation.

Long-term **F4-LT** No recommendation.

Prior Finding

F-4 The IA (Guidehouse) follows a near-identical, parallel process of unpacking orders (see Appendix III for IA's specific workflows): reviewing, data entry, approval by team leaders, examination of evidence and due dates, etc. This is done using DAITS data, but is wholly independent of DOE processes. This is performed by about 15 staff members of Guidehouse, which is not enough as they are experiencing a significant backlog, as well.



Implications

This is not the typical function of an auditor. In the LV case, the IA is acting more as third party oversight, accounting for the measurement of compliance. This is time-consuming, expensive, and does not promote DOE accountability to measure itself.



Appendix I: Proposed Organization of the Implementation Unit

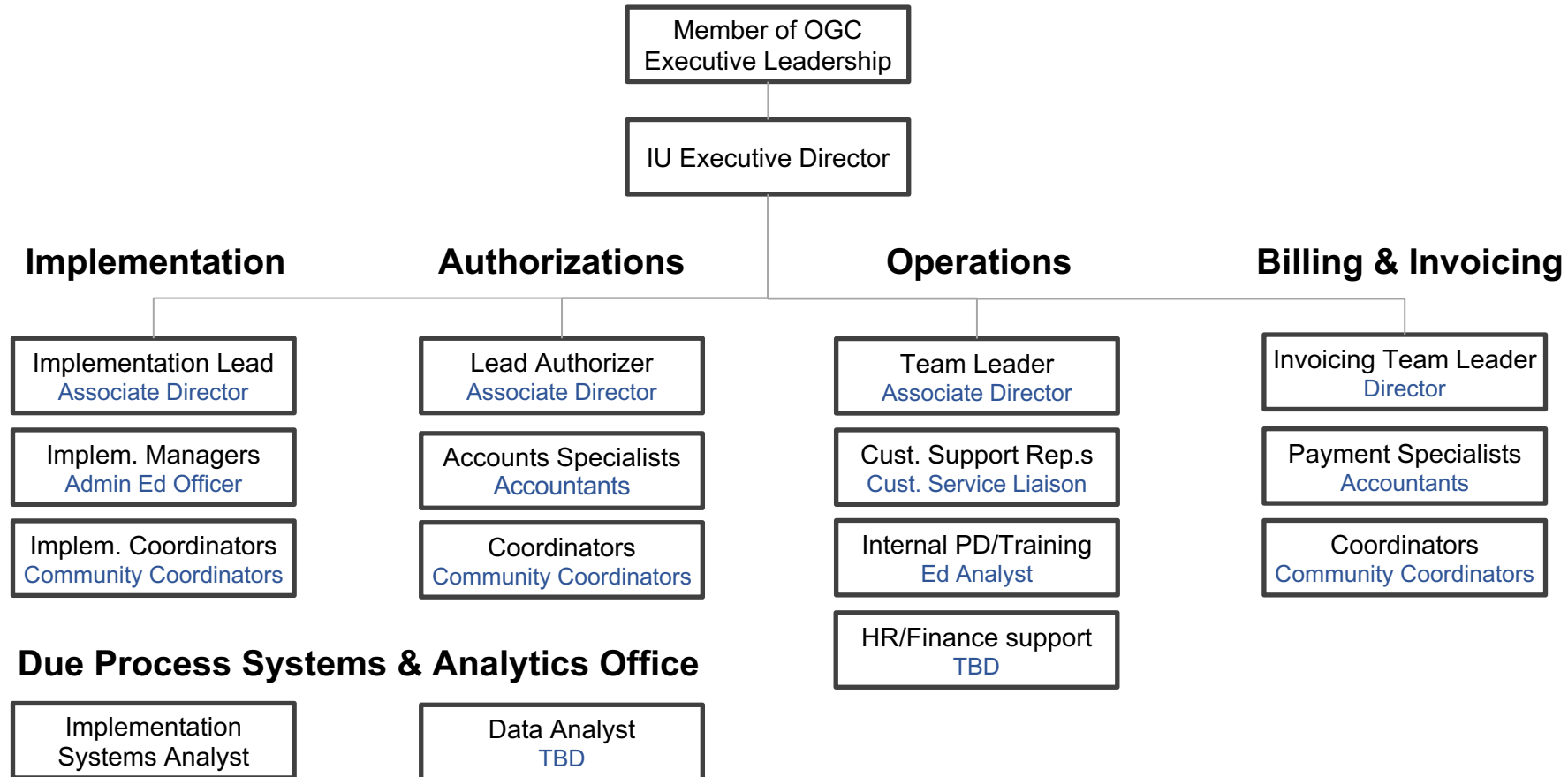
The Implementation Unit

Introduction

- The Implementation Unit must be organized to meet the volume of cases of the present day.
- Summary:
 - Change: The Implementation Unit is being relocated to the Office of the General Counsel (OGC). This provides the necessary leadership and direct executive involvement to effectuate the change that will be required.
 - New: The DOE must enhance communications and support to families. A new customer support function will establish a dialogue with families and service providers to answer questions around due process.
 - New: Additional focus on data/KPIs to monitor performance will require additional resources within OGC.

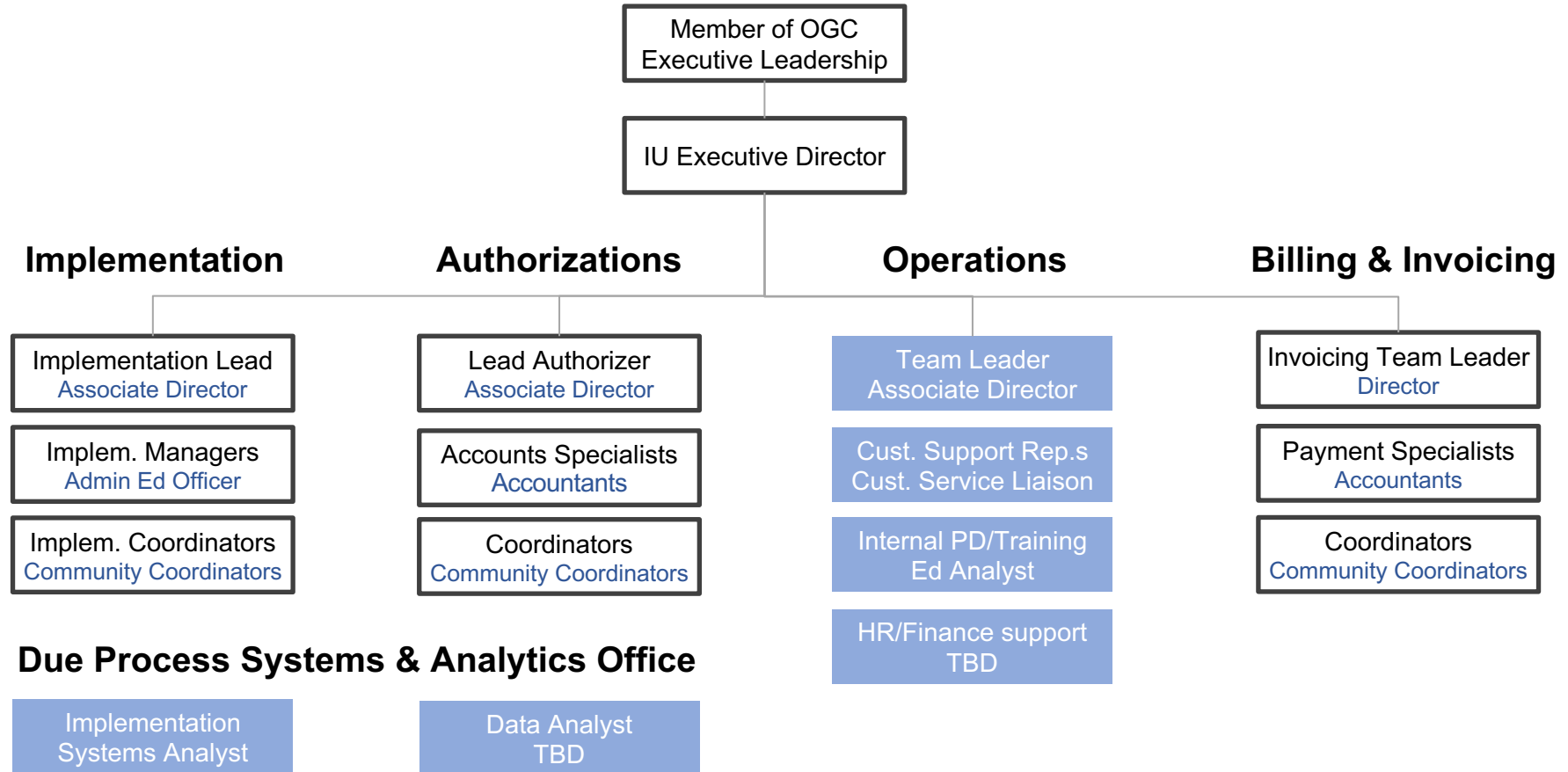
Proposed Org. Structure: Implementation Unit

Near-term recommendation for the Implementation Unit. Structure should be adapted as needed in the future.



Proposed Org. Structure: Implementation Unit

blue = new roles



New Data and Systems Roles

Processes and analytics must be continually optimized to improve the timeliness of implementations going forward. These roles would work within the OGC Due Process Systems & Analytics Office.

Implementation Systems Analyst

A systems or business analyst is someone who learns and interprets existing processes in order to document future state improvements. Analysts often work in support of a digitalization / data systems initiative but can also play an important role in an organization's change management strategies. (3-LT)

Top priorities:

- Gather relevant data and documentation to build understanding of the organization's processes and systems (LV / implementation)
- Analyze, develop and share potential improvements to processes with input from stakeholders
- Contribute to communications, training and SOPM documentation
- Work with systems teams (e.g., SEDMS) to contribute to wireframes or document requirements
- Document current and future state workflows

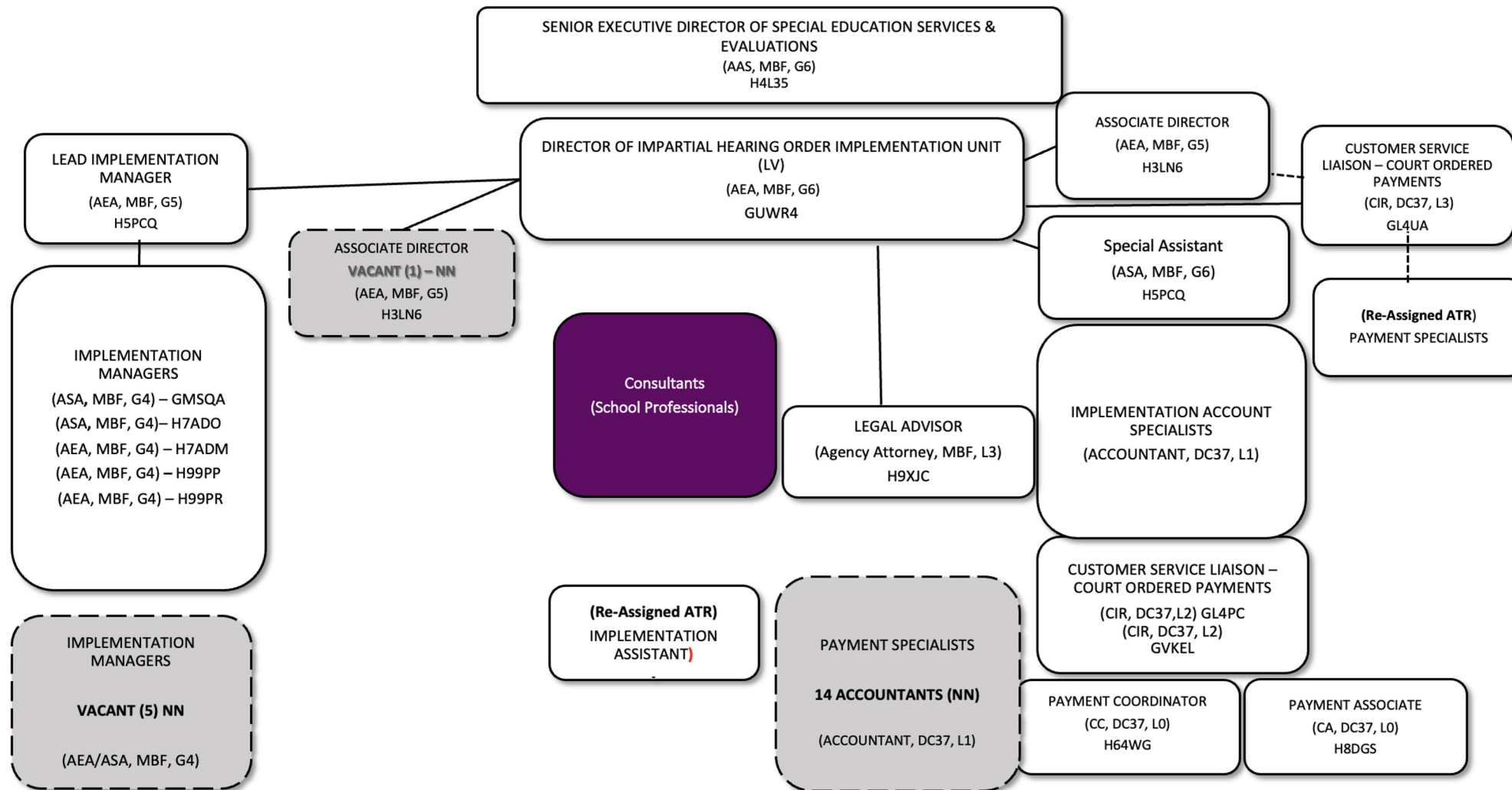
Data Analyst

A data analyst combines and reviews data to answer questions and inform decisions. They also communicate this information to leadership and other stakeholders. The IU data analyst would examine operational data (KPIs), consolidate data from different sources for analysis, and support audits. (F1-NT)

Top priorities:

- Work with stakeholders to learn implementation processes and define key performance indicators (KPIs) for the IU, (2-NT)
- Design a solution to collect and analyze data assets from various sources
- Work with technical owners of source systems (e.g., DAITS) to collect key operational data assets of the IU, (2-LT)
- Generate reports of available data as needs arise
- Share insights with team, stakeholders and leadership

Current Org. Chart of the Implementation Unit



Appendix II: Central-Based Service Order Processes

Service Orders Implemented by DOE Central Offices

Supporting Recommendations to 10-NT (1 of 3)

DOE is ordered to conduct an IEP meeting for the student

DOE does not currently have a process for ensuring, when ordered, an IEP meeting is held and the IEP is updated according to the order. **B9-NT** The Implementation Unit must develop and communicate a more consistent and clear procedure to inform schools and CSEs that an IEP meeting has been ordered and to follow up and ensure the IEP was updated. See B1-NT.

Student requires provision of nursing

There is confusion in the field over which medical forms are required when an order is issued for nursing, as well as why the DOE Office of School Health (OSH) often requires additional forms or information following the hearing. **B10-NT** Aside from the Medication Administration Form (MAF) and HIPAA forms, no other paperwork or evidence should be required once an order requires the provision of nursing.

The step in identifying a nurse from a nursing agency is a source of considerable delay (sometimes of months) for the student. Nursing agencies may claim the posting but not have the nurse on staff. **B11-NT** The DOE and the Office of School Health shall modify applicable contracts with nursing agencies to specify that postings shall remain open until an individual nurse has been formally assigned to the student, (i.e., not when the nursing agency claims the case).

Service Orders Implemented by DOE Central Offices

Supporting Recommendations to 10-NT (2 of 3)

Student requires provision of transportation to school

There are not adequate communications among DOE Central offices to coordinate an order requiring the provision of transportation / nursing. It is unclear how the IU and OPT communicate about the needs of the order and track its implementation. **B12-NT** Formalize, designate and confirm a Liaison role in OPT (with escalation path) to coordinate orders between the IU, OPT (and OSH as applicable). Improve communications and track implementation of an order requiring transportation, (also see B3b-NT). The IU should regularly provide status to parent on status of the action item.

Student requires provision of assistive technology

Parents are often unclear of the fulfillment status of the assistive technology ordered by the Hearing Officer. There is also not a process whereby the DOE can provide funds upfront for the parent to buy the technology, (i.e., only reimbursements; no process for parents who cannot afford the upfront cost). **B13-NT** See 5-NT for recommended streamline and 1-LT for providing transparency into status.

Service Orders Implemented by DOE Central Offices

Supporting Recommendations to 10-NT (3 of 3)

Home Instruction is ordered for the student

DOE does not proactively confirm that home instruction has been delivered when ordered, (just arranged).

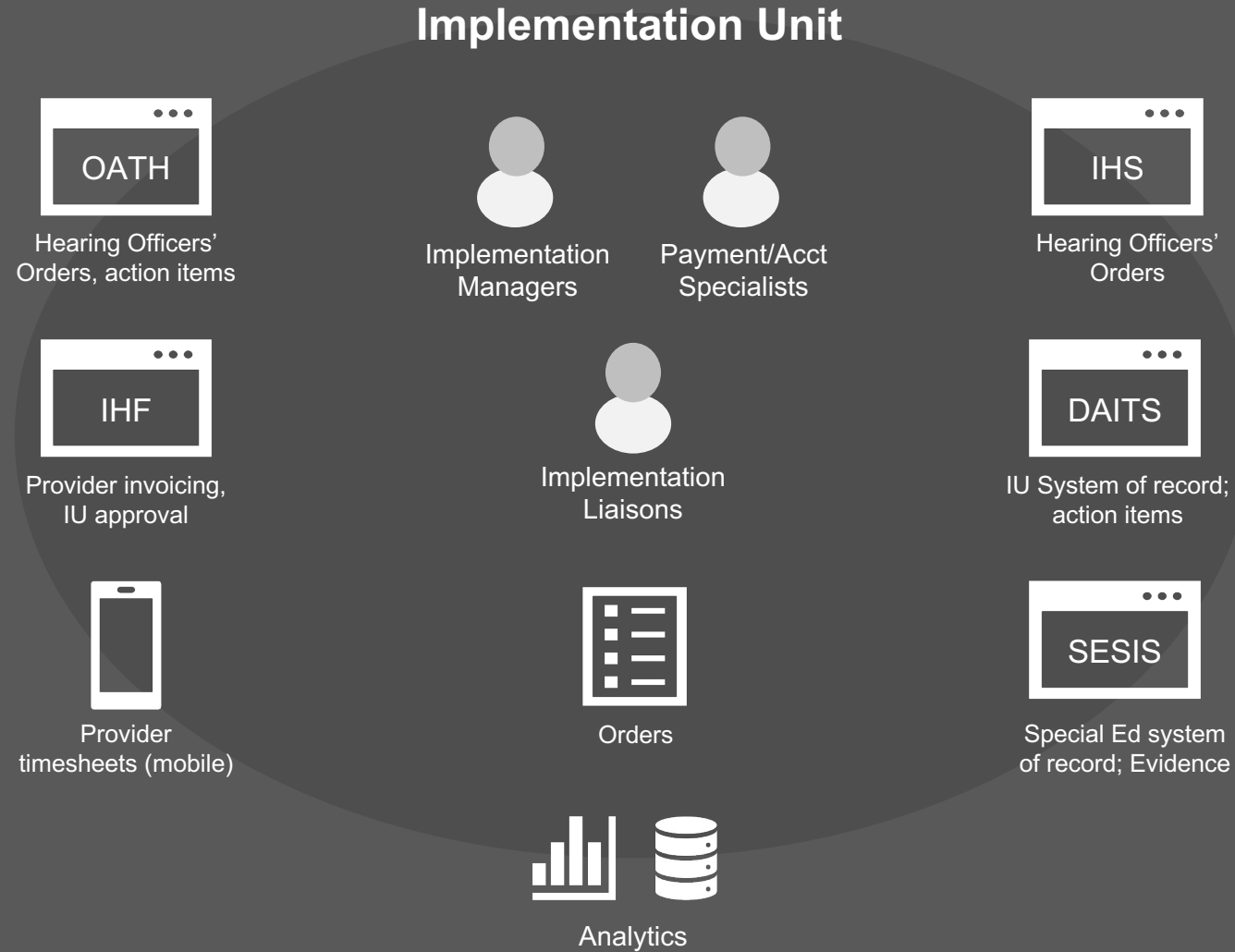
B14-LT For each home instruction order, the Implementation Manager should confirm the actual provision of home instruction as defining implementation of the order.

Student needs to be placed in a DOE school

Following placement, DOE does not proactively confirm that the school and class meet the need identified in the order and IEP. **B15-LT** For each order placing a student at a DOE school, the Implementation Manager and OSE should confirm the actual placement as appropriate and meeting the need of the student, (per order and IEP).

Appendix III: A Proposed Near-Term Approach to Data Systems

A Proposed Short-Term Approach to Data Systems



A Proposed Short-Term Approach to Data Systems

Implementation Unit

OATH is developing a process and system to capture the hearing officers' orders



Hearing Officers' Orders, action items



Implementation Managers



Payment/Acct Specialists



Hearing Officers' Orders

Though in process of being redesigned, IHS will still be necessary to capture orders

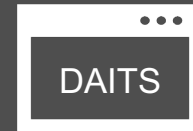
IHF is a module of FAMIS built to process incoming invoices from service providers (LV)



Provider invoicing, IU approval



Implementation Liaisons



IU System of record; action items

In process of being redesigned for IHMS, but will need priority fixes addressed in the near-term

This is a consideration for transitioning away from physical invoices to mobile



Provider timesheets (mobile)



Orders



Special Ed system of record; Evidence

Currently in redesign and rebuild, SEISIS use will still be necessary for several years



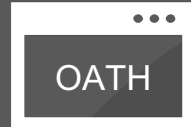
Analytics

A Proposed Short-Term Approach to Data Systems

Implementation Unit

4-NT: Build the user-friendly web form for capturing orders from Hearing Officers in phases to add key data points for implementation over time.

4-NT,
6-NT



Hearing Officers' Orders, action items



Provider invoicing, IU approval

A7-LT



Provider timesheets (mobile)

A7-LT: Evaluate scenarios and build/procure a mobile app by which providers can enter their hours on their phone upon providing the service, (i.e., a timesheet).

2-NT: Copy and collect data assets from implementation-related data sources (e.g., DAITS, IHS, FAMIS, etc.) to analyze for IU workflow purposes.

2-NT



Analytics



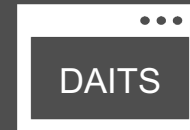
Implementation Managers



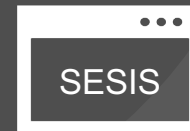
Payment/Acct Specialists



Hearing Officers' Orders



IU System of record; action items



Special Ed system of record; Evidence

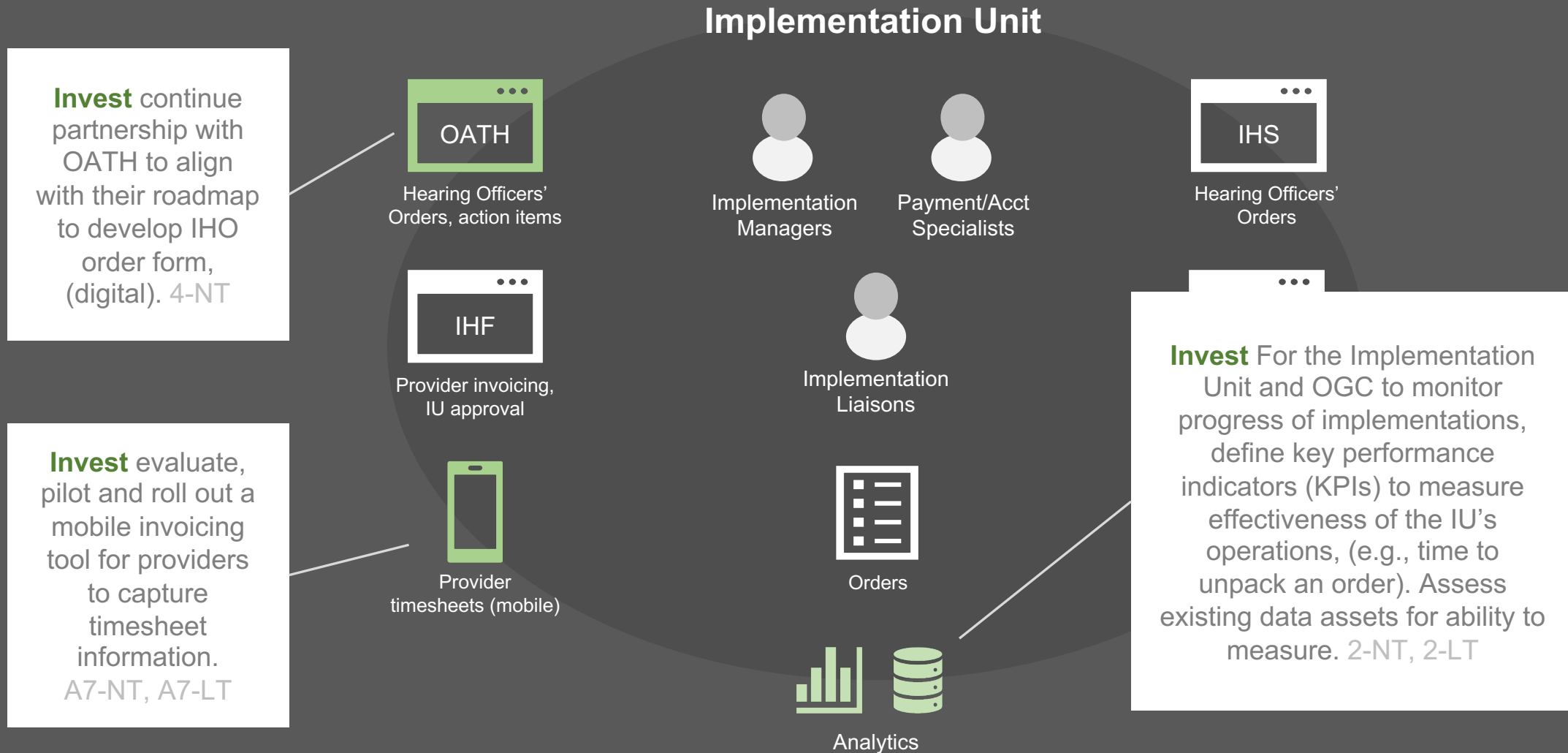
B1-NT

D1-NT

B1-NT: The IU should assign a full-time resource to flag incoming orders deemed timely and high priority, (e.g., D75). Flagged orders could then be routed to schools in a timelier manner.

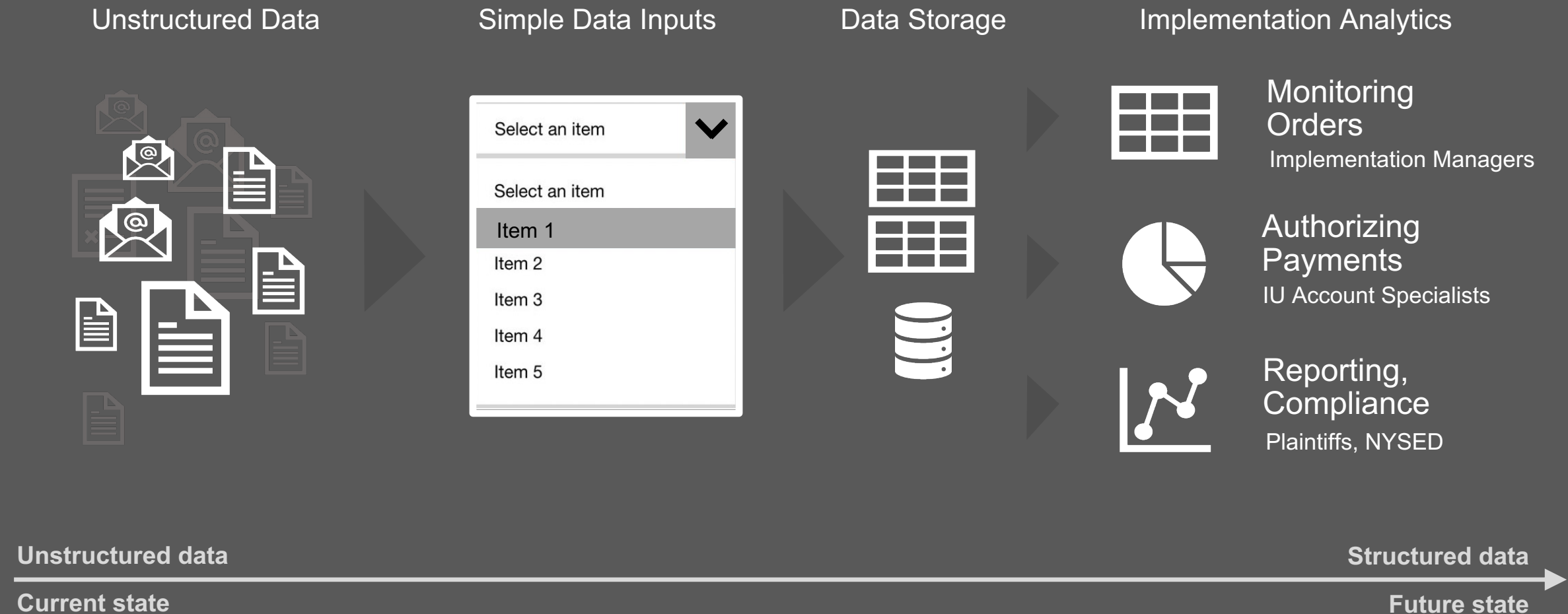
D1-NT: Inventory all functional issues of DAITS that impede the implementation workflow (See Appendix IV for list to be prioritized).

A Proposed Short-Term Approach to Data Systems



Data must be structured to be processed efficiently

Digitalizing the invoice submissions for providers and the input format of IHOs' decisions. (Rec. 6-NT)

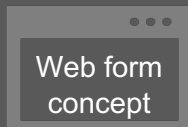


A Phased Approach to the Digital Order

Design of the Impartial Hearing Officer's order should be done in phases.

Phase 1

- Determine high-priority field elements of the order
- Design a simple form to capture action items
- Iterate / expand over time



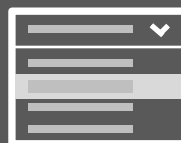
Define basic form
Design and iterate

Phase 2

- Define messaging and communicate changes
- Build and release web form and support hearing officers in data entry
- Monitor incoming orders



Hearing Officer makes decision (types .doc)



Hearing Officer enters action items in web form (MVP)



IU receives list of digital orders and assigns



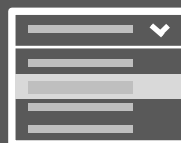
Still requires unpacking; data entry

Phase 3

- Integrate functionality and data with OATH roadmap
- Enhance web form with additional needs
- Build necessary functions in IHMS/SEDMS



Hearing Officer makes decision (types .doc)



Hearing Officer enters action items in enhanced form



IU reviews list of digital orders and assigns



Key attributes digitalized; Minimal unpacking

Appendix IV: Enhancements to DAITs (near-term) to be Prioritized

Prioritize Near-Term System Enhancements

ID	Area	Suggested Improvement	Description
1	Authorizations	If the authorization is for a pendency order, the authorization should be extended on a monthly basis until a new order is received (Termination, Final, etc.) The initial authorization should be for the monthly amount based on the mandate entered. When a pendency flag is present, the authorization is only for one month. Once the invoice /payment for the month has been completed and no additional order has been received, the system will automatically authorize the next month after the first of the month. The money allocation should become available at the mandate for reallocation.	Scheduling Payment Functionality should be reviewed. Authorizations for Pendency Orders should be scheduled to continued throughout the IHO process.
2	Authorizations	Reorganize the Prospective Payment Form and Reimbursement Form in IHF to pull mandate information from the action item. Each Mandate will be classified under each of the categories (Tuition, Services, etc). Authorization will be organized under each mandate. Total Authorizations cannot exceed the mandated amount.	Enhance IHF to include actions to help manage authorizations at the bank level (calculations (Invoiced per Provider, Bank Balance Amount and Flags for active flag for Provider Authorizations)
3	Authorizations	If an authorization has been entered but for reasons an authorization needs to be stop to prevent any further payments to the provider for the mandate, the system should allow the user to stop payments. The system should remove any authorizations for future months but maintain the current month line available. The user should be required to enter a reason.	Stop Payment Functionality in DAITS should be reviewed.
4	Authorizations	Payment specialist should be able to edit authorizations if there is no impact to existing invoices / payments.	Edit Authorizations
5	Authorizations	Based on the information entered on the Payment Disbursement Approval screen, the system should provide a warning based on the authorization that are projected to be expended within 45 days. Potentially to Payment Specialist, Invoice Specialist and/or Providers. Need to be assess based on solution for Items 13 / 16.	Assess whether a warning could be established based on average monthly expenditure and a threshold.
6	Authorizations	Total Cost due for reimbursement payments. Adding an editable data box for "Total Amount Due" on the authorization page for each reimbursement action item would resolve this issue. PAYMENT STATUS should then reflect "Paying" for any partial reimbursement just like it would for a partial tuition or services payment directly to the providers.	Currently, DAITS does not capture the TOTAL COST for reimbursement action items, leaving the false impression that when a partial reimbursement is entered, and approved, the payment is complete, which is not the case.
7	Authorizations	Ongoing pendency cases. The system should be able to capture those cases that are open on July 1 and have action items for a pendency order from the prior SY that require re-authorization upon the crossing over into a new school year.	Currently, we have no way of identifying cases with existing authorizations about to expire, but require reauthorization due to ongoing pendency as we cross into a new school year.
8	Authorizations	Private School Name. Adding the drop box for "SELECT SCHOOL NAME" as required by the authorization screen, would resolve this issue.	Currently, for tuition items, there is no way to search authorized items by School Name.

Prioritize Near-Term System Enhancements

ID	Area	Suggested Improvement	Description
9	Authorizations	IEEs completed after a withdrawal date. Implementing a manual override for evaluations ordered, but not provided until after a withdrawal date, would resolve this issue.	Currently, we have to submit a pay memo to NPSP for any evaluation ordered but conducted after the withdrawal date.
10	Authorizations	Tuition and Reimbursement approvals: The Unit is seeking the following: -\$50,000 threshold for all tuition payments whether they are prospective or reimbursement -\$25,000 threshold for all service reimbursement payments (this would match the current prospective threshold for service)	Currently, all reimbursement tuition and service payments require a second layer of approval (within the Unit) at any amount, i.e., a \$100 tuition deposit reimbursement and a \$50 meals reimbursement. All prospective payments over \$25,000 require a second layer of approval.
11	Authorizations	DAITS AUTH: Add an assignee drop down menu on the authorization screen to ASSIGN a PAYMENT LIAISON in DAITS at the time of authorization, that transfers to IHF Financial. Upon authorization, the authorizers would assign an invoice payment grid to a specific member of the invoicing team based on the vendor authorized. The invoicing team member could then sort IHF by their own queue of work.	
12	Authorizations	DAITS: for cases with multiple providers, there should be a "Partially Authorized/Multiple Providers" payment status.	
13	Calculations	The system should be linked to auto calculate the number of weeks awarded to the student. Field should be added with a drop-down box to the Action Item dialogue box ACTION ITEM EDIT for 10-month, 12 month, 52 weeks, and OTHER (Editable to be able to add in information IE 36 WEEKS OR 44 WEEKS).	Currently all calculations are done manually.
14	Calculations	This information should then be fed to the authorization page and call for the authorizer to enter the start date of services so that the system can automatically calculate/prorate as needed.	Currently all calculations are done manually.
15	Calculations	The authorization page should also have an editable field for SESSIONS PER WEEK.	Currently all calculations are done manually.
16	Calculations	The authorization fields for RATE X the newly created NUMBER of SESSIONS PER WEEK X the newly created NUMBER OF WEEKS OF SERVICES AWARDED should be linked to auto calculate the TOTAL COST.	Currently all calculations are done manually.

Prioritize Near-Term System Enhancements

ID	Area	Suggested Improvement	Description
17	Case Management	When receiving orders from IHO, an order should be classified with an Order Type (Final, Interim, Pendency, etc.) and an Urgency (Immediate, or Standard).	The Order should accurately identify Order Type and Urgency for outbound orders to IHOIU
18	Case Management	Add additional attributes being recorded on separate spreadsheet to the Case Details. Text box for details should not be limited in character count.	Add additional fields to the Case Detail section.
19	Case Management	Add a reminder section to each Action Item.	Implementation Managers are adding additional action items to monitor other action items.
20	Case Management	Update the Case File Report with additional information. Case file report in DAITS and IH Financial must include Service start and end dates and the payment details for those payments that have been made, i.e., voucher date and check information (EFT/paper + date issued)	Update the Case File Report to provide additional information such as Payment Service Start and End Date.
21	Case Management	Search Action Items by PAYMENT STATUS. Allowing a search by "Payment Status" would resolve this issue.	Currently, DAITS does not allow user to search caseload by PAYMENT STATUS; as such we cannot readily capture the cases requiring authorizations or payments forcing us to rely on back-end reports and excel trackers.
22	Case Management	SY at issue. On the CASE INFORMATION page, EDITABLE section, add field for SY at issue, including options for multiple or n/a.	Currently, we have no way of identifying cases that are still pending by the school year.
23	Case Management	System upgrade: FAMIS auto-generated email. "Payment Processed" email notifications should be implemented to payee with amount, service and period processed for each payment entered upon the submitting or posting of the payment.	This would clarify the check amounts, increase transparency, and reduce the noise/inquiries our office receives from vendors providing better accounting to vendors.
24	Communications	The Communication section should allow for modification to templated information (standard language) and allow for the modification of specific information.	Update Parent Letters to provide exact details to the Parent.
25	Communications	Update Authorization Emails to provide exact details to the Parent and the Service Provider	The Communication section should allow for modification to templated information (standard language) and allow for the modification of specific information.
26	Communications	Add an option to enter multiple email addresses to the auto-generated authorization email so that a parent advocate or parent can get a CC on the email to the vendor.	Recipients of Authorization Emails.

Prioritize Near-Term System Enhancements

ID	Area	Suggested Improvement	Description
27	Communications	System upgrade: FAMIS auto-generated email. "Outreach" email notifications should be implemented for each prospective payment or reimbursement item upon approval of action item.	The email would request all the necessary information a standard outreach email from an authorizer would and would include the authorizer's contact information.
28	Document Management	Document uploading. Creating a drag and drop function and allow for any size document would resolve this issue.	Currently, we must save and upload documents to DAITS which has a size limitation forcing us to have to break up documents to smaller sizes.
29	Invoicing	Assess feasibility of an automated invoice submission process. Outbound integration between IHF and Vendor Portal providing Authorization information to Vendor Portal.	Allow providers to submit invoices against their authorizations from IHF. Permit invoice certification. If the invoices matches the mandate, allow the invoice to be processed. If the invoice does not match the allow the Billing / Invoice Specialist to perform remedial action.
30	Invoicing	Change the IHF Multiple Invoice Add Function to allow for more than three invoices per month per Provider by lowering the + 10 value	Change the auto-generated date when using the Add action button on the Payment Disbursement Approval screen from +10 from the previous date in the month to +x?
31	Invoicing	Develop an in-system report based on the Case # that shows the authorized amount and the invoiced amount by mandate to respond to subpoenas.	From either a service action item or an mandate on the Prospective Payment Form , allow the user to view a report that shows each authorization for a mandate, for each authorization show the invoices paid.
32	Invoicing	Direct payment to vendors for services rendered: Discontinue auditing of invoices under \$10,000. This would speed up the process and get more providers paid quicker. Shift the onus to the parents and attorneys to audit and attest to the accuracy of the invoices submitted as required by the language of the invoice. Also include the provider, parent, and attorney/advocate on all submissions.	\$226,037,077 in payments < \$10K
33	Invoicing	IHOIU Billing and Invoicing Mailbox: Enable Outlook to be able store unlimited number of invoices emailed to us. Search results should yield both inbox and archive. Inbox should have capacity to hold all the emails and folders in the mailbox should be the same regardless of user or day.	Currently, we must access several different outlook folders to retrieve invoices. We were told that the mailbox exceeded capacity, so DIIT created an archive folder for all emails older than 3 months. However, archive emails do not populate on a search within the inbox. Staff must search the inbox + the archive folder and users are finding varying folders appear depending on the day and depending on the user.

Prioritize Near-Term System Enhancements

ID	Area	Suggested Improvement	Description
34	Invoicing	Master Invoice. Implement a "master invoice" in excel (perhaps also in pre-populated forms) that have built in formulas to ensure invoices are submitted by the vendors without mistakes.	
35	Invoicing	Online billing. As suggested by NPSP, IH Financial should be linked to ERS to provide an online platform for payments.	
36	Invoicing	Payment reports. All vendors should receive monthly payment reports of payments issued by our office so that they are appropriately allocating funds issued pursuant to Impartial Hearing Orders.	
37	Invoicing	There was a plan in action to move IH Financial out of FAMIS and create a standalone platform through Onepoint.	As you know, we use IH Financial to process all invoice payments. To get to IH financial- we need FAMIS access. In order to get FAMIS access, we have to submit an online form to get access to the city sytem, and then a DOE office has to route that access through a DOE account. Then Miriam Quijano grants the access to IH Financial within FAMIS. It is a lot of steps to get access to IH Financial for any new staff member and there are often conflicts between DAITS and FAMIS user IDs that cause further delays in actually accessing the system.
38	Invoicing	IHF: Drag and Drop Invoice Upload for Invoices in IHF - so the actual invoice is saved right next to the payment grid in IHF. A payment portal in which the vendors handle this would be optimal. In the meantime, there should be a way to access the invoice that corresponds to the amount processed right in IH Financial.	
39	Invoicing	IHF: DAITS Action Item Detail should populate to IH Financial and be visible without having to click a link	
40	Invoicing	IHF: IH Financial should capture the invoice processor on the payment grid without having to go to the print screen.	
41	Performance	ALL APPS: Apps should run in multiple browsers	
42	UI Navigation	All subheadings on the sortable. The default can be remain the same.	On Control Main Screen , all subheadings in the grid should be sortable.

Prioritize Near-Term System Enhancements

ID	Area	Suggested Improvement	Description
43	Unpacking	IHOIU should have assignment tools that automatically assign cases to implementation managers for unpacking.	Provide for an automated assignment methodology like round robin assigned of active Implementation Managers. Implementation Manager can be placed in an inactive status if on vacation.
44	Unpacking	An Implementation Manager should be able to mark whether they have reviewed an order.	On the Documents Tab, add a check box that notes whether or not an order had been reviewed.
45	Unpacking	Implementation Managers should be able to copy an existing action item to create new action items.	User should be able to select an action item from the system. Open the Action item Add screen. Select a copy button and would open a pop up to identify the Case to associate the new action item to. The Due Date should be based on the Creation date of the Action Item. The fields should be editable.
46	Unpacking	Add fields to the Action item Add screen to record the Mandate information when creating an Action Item for a service. The fields should populate a mandate table that is used to send information to SESIS (potentially for DOE supported requests) and PA (potentially for non-DOE supported requests). In combination, would include an interim state using DAITS.	DAITS and IHF currently does not have integrations to SESIS-PA that could ensure coordinated delivery of service. Outbound Integration from DAITS/IHF to SESIS-PA providing Order Mandate information to SESIS-PA.
47	Unpacking	Inbound Integration from SESIS / PA to provide First Attend Date, First Encounter Date or if an RSA has been issued to meet a Compliance Requirement.	Add fields to the Action Item Add Screen to record if an Action item has a First Attend Date, First Encounter Date or has an RSA issued.
48	Unpacking	Search for Orders in DAITS that require review. A checkbox to confirm "Decision Reviewed by Compliance Team" on the DOCUMENT tab; add column to the right of "Date Decision Mailed to Parent" would resolve this issue.	Currently, DAITS does not allow user to search for Orders requiring review and unpacking, forcing us to set up supplementary trackers to capture this information.
49	Unpacking	DAITS: At the unpacking stage, a drop down menu for DOE-provided Related Services items in DAITS much like ones in SESIS for populating an IEP. The drop down menus would include Service Type, Number of Sessions per week, Length of Session, Staffing Ratio and Implementation Mechanism (i.e. RSA, transmittal/contract agency, DOE personnel). This could connect to SESIS PA.	

Appendix V: OOC-required documentation

Documentation: the Office of the Comptroller

When asked for documentation OOC requires for payments/audits (received 2/1/2023)

We cannot say, in the abstract, what supporting payment documentation the Comptroller's Audit Bureau would examine if it were to conduct a future audit of DOE's IHO-ordered payments. The requirements of each audit are different and will be based on the particular processes and procedures being audited, as well as the information that we receive from the agency after the commencement of the audit. More information about our prior audits of DOE can be found on our website: https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/?fwp_type=audit&fwp_agency=education-department-of”

Further, the C's Office has not audited DOE's payments made pursuant to IHO orders. Comptroller's audits assess an agency's internal controls to determine whether the agency is complying with whatever the governing standard is that the agency is operating under when it comes to authorizing payments or the like. At best, the C's Office requests information/documentation from DOE to determine whether the IHO-ordered payment was assigned to the correct fiscal year for budgetary purposes, without specifying what paperwork it needs to collect/submit to support the payment requests that is entered into FAMIS/FMS.

Appendix VI: Special Master Program Monitoring Approach

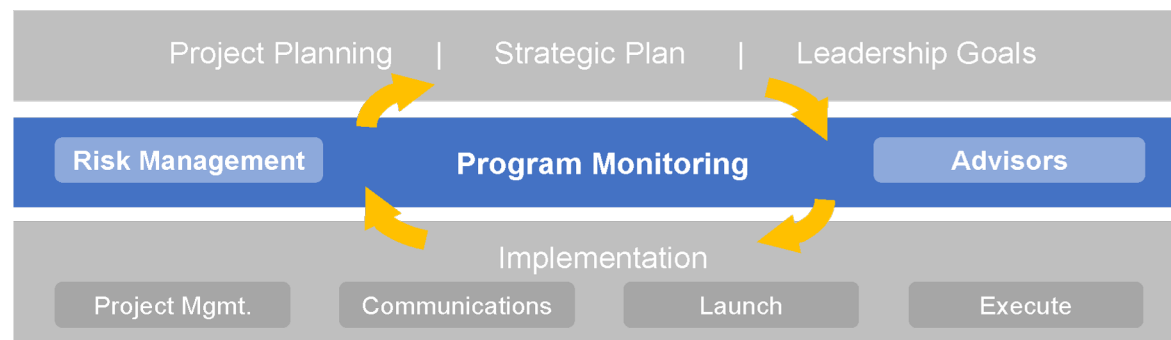
LV Program Monitoring Objectives

Bridging the space between planning and execution of the strategies deemed essential by the Court and validating the status for all parties.

Report the status and progress of recommendations approved by the Court, and advise in the definition of projects and initiatives

Identify likely challenges or risks to individual recommendations (projects); assure that project plans address the challenges proactively and realistically

Independently validate the quality and completeness of the work and that they are on track for meeting the objective of the recommendation(s)



Ensure that the DOE is managing project risks and issues, including dependencies outside of the project

Ensure that the DOE and its partners (vendors) are applying best practices including appropriate tools, techniques, methodologies, and best practices

Contacts

David Irwin
Special Master to the Court (LV vs DOE)
david@thru-ed.com
(646) 489-7078