

**Status of the Implementation
of the Child Welfare Component
of the North Carolina Families Accessing Services
Through Technology (NC FAST) system**

SL 2016-94, Section 12C.1.(c)



**Report to the
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and
Human Services
and
Fiscal Research Division**

**By
North Carolina Department of Health and Human
Services**

January 1, 2017

INTRODUCTION

Status of the Child Welfare Component of the North Carolina Families Accessing Services Through Technology (NC FAST) System:

SESSION LAW 2016-94 SECTION 12C.1.(c) Child Welfare/NC FAST – The Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, shall continue toward completion of the Child Welfare component of the North Carolina Families Accessing Services Through Technology (NC FAST) system to (i) bring the State into compliance with the Statewide Information System systematic factor of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) and (ii) ensure that data quality meets federal standards and adequate information is collected and available to counties to assist in tracking children and outcomes across counties.

It is the intent of the General Assembly that the Child Welfare component of the NC FAST system be operational by December 31, 2017. To that end, the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, shall report on the development, implementation, and outcomes of the Child Welfare component of the NC FAST system to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services quarterly, beginning October 1, 2016 and ending with a final report on February 1, 2018. The report shall include, at a minimum, each of the following:

- (1) The current timeline for development and implementation of the Child Welfare component to NC FAST.
- (2) Any adjustments and justifications for adjustments to the timeline.
- (3) Progress on the development and implementation of the system.
- (4) Address any identified issues in developing or implementing the Child Welfare component to NC FAST and solutions to address those issues.
- (5) The level of county participation and involvement in each phase of the project.
- (6) Any budget and expenditure reports, including overall project budget and expenditures and current fiscal year budget and expenditures.

Timeline

1) SECTION 12C.1.(c).1 The current timeline for development and implementation of the child welfare component to NC FAST

Per the language in Section 12C.1.(c), the initial goal for implementation of the Child Welfare component of NC FAST was that it be operational by December 31, 2017. Section (2) below provides additional details on the project timeline.

2) SECTION 12C.1.(c).2 Any adjustments and justifications for adjustments to the timeline

The Child Welfare component, also called Project 4 (P4), will introduce a significant change to the way county departments of social services operate and manage their Child Welfare programs. Given the limited automation present in support of current Child Welfare operations, it is vital that county Child Welfare leaders and staff have the support required to ensure a smooth transition to NC FAST and reduce the deployment risk. As explained below, the initial project plan did not account for the business process improvement and extended implementation support staffing cost estimates. It is extremely important to provide business process improvement and extended support for the success of the project.

Based on feedback and the results of prior NC FAST deployments, the rollout of a major system requires a carefully planned, phased deployment across all 100 counties in the state. Also, the initial schedule date was subject to completion of the Fit/Gap Analysis Phase. The Fit/Gap Analysis Phase of the project compares state requirements against the capabilities of the IBM base software (i.e., Cúram) and identifies which requirements are met with the base software and which requirements require configuration or customization of the base software. This phase facilitates the identification of issues and scope changes required to meet North Carolina requirements.

The Fit/Gap phase was completed in June 2016, and a high level Deployment Plan was developed. This expanded P4 Deployment Plan was developed based on input from the three county directors (referred to as the Tri-Chairs) leading the Children Services Committee of the North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services (NCACDSS). The Deployment Plan was also reviewed with the NC DHHS Executive Advisory Committee (EAC). This committee serves as a steering committee for NC FAST and comprises county directors, state office representatives, and other key stakeholders. The deployment schedule has also been presented to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services. Reviewing the deployment schedule with these groups is critical as it promotes buy-in and early identification and resolution of issues and concerns with the approach.

Therefore, the Child Welfare component of NC FAST timeline has been updated:

- The system will be deployed to pilot Counties in two releases of system functionality. (Refer to the Release breakdown shown on page 4):
 - July 2017: Release One – focused primarily on Intake, CPS Assessment, and In-Home/Out-of-Home Case Management and supporting capabilities
 - December 2017: Release Two – focused primarily on Adoption functionality and supporting capabilities

- Subsequent Deployments to remaining Counties:
 - Release One through April 2018

To view the timeline, refer to Appendix A

Release Two through October 2018 Implementation Strategy

3) SECTION 12C.1.(c).3 Progress on the development and implementation of the system

The P4 Project implementation will be conducted in phases, with two major releases. Development occurs across four parallel tracks, using an Agile Project Management methodology. The Agile methodology engages with county stakeholders very early in the requirements confirmation and system design activities. The software is developed incrementally, so that functionality is demonstrated to the county representatives as the system is being built; their feedback helps to shape the design of the system as development and builds continue. This approach is in contrast with the traditional “waterfall” approach to system development, in which county stakeholders were exposed to the system very late in the development process, just prior to go-live. Due to deferred exposure of stakeholders to the new system, the waterfall approach provided limited capacity to address stakeholder feedback prior to go-live. The Agile approach will minimize implementation risks by addressing key user concerns prior to go-live.

The project scope also includes the development and deployment of a mobile solution. The mobile child welfare investigator application, the first mobile application for NC FAST, provides child welfare social workers with the ability to complete their casework outside the office, thus allowing them to spend more time interacting with families instead of completing case documentation back at the DSS office. Case workers will be able to perform their work activities in a disconnected mode, with automatic synchronization of data to the system when a network connection becomes available.

Deployment to pilot counties will be conducted prior to the phased roll-out to remaining counties.

The planned high-level functionalities are listed below:

Project 4 Child Services Components



- *Enhancements corresponding to the Release 2 features
- Rel 1 – Release 1 and Rel 2 – Release 2

Current Status and Planned Activities

The P4 Child Welfare project team has completed the Fit/Gap Phase of the project and is now progressing through design and development. The team is using an Agile Project Management methodology to ensure early county and state stakeholder involvement, adherence to the end users' requirements, and to contain schedule, cost, and scope risks. Our counties and state stakeholders are engaged throughout the design and development of each functionality release and will complete User Acceptance Testing (UAT) before a release is approved. UAT is an opportunity for state office and county staff to test the system prior to pilot county implementations. The status highlights are listed below:

- Joint application design (JAD) activities are a collaborative approach to the design of NC FAST Project 4 that promotes buy-in early in the project through the active participation of state office and county stakeholders. JAD activities continue with input from the five pilot counties (Franklin, Guilford, Richmond, Rockingham, and Sampson), the seven Group 1 counties (Buncombe, Carteret, Catawba, Chatham, Cleveland, Orange, Rowan), and the State Division of Social Services (DSS).

- The development approach is to use Out of the Box (OOTB) software and incorporate NC-specific policy and process changes, promote ease of use, and integrate functionality across a state-wide system. Leveraging the capabilities of OOTB software reduces the time and effort required to build the NC FAST Project 4 solution. It also minimizes the long-term maintenance of the system as the software vendor continues to invest in the capabilities of the base OOTB software to take advantage of emerging technological advances to serve their global customer base.
- Onsite demonstrations of the working system are continuing as each component is completed.
- Continued development of a document management roadmap; exploring options for how to establish a statewide document management solution, leveraging county investments to date. The state is currently evaluating potential solutions from multiple vendors. Several meetings and product demonstrations have been held with vendors, county, representatives, and the state. We are assessing which approach is in the best interests of the state and counties. It is expected that a solution will be chosen in early 2017.
- Completed initial visits with all five pilot counties: Franklin, Guilford, Richmond, Rockingham, and Sampson. Pilot counties are participating in design activities and software demonstrations.
- Holding monthly status meetings with State DSS leadership and Tri-Chair committee.
- A collaborative web site was shared with pilot and Group 1 counties in December 2016. It will serve as a communication hub for all counties during pre-implementation.
- A project email address and dedicated email service also targeted to pilot and Group 1 counties rolled out in December 2016. All incoming email about Child Services questions and concerns is sent to NCFAST_4_Child_Services@dhhs.nc.gov.
- Sharing the latest information about the rollout of Child Services in NC FAST continues at regional meetings of the NC Association of County Directors of Social Services (NCACDSS) and other stakeholder groups as requested.

Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS)

A Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) is a case management information system that states and tribes may develop to support their child welfare program needs. If a state or tribe elects to build a CCWIS, the federal government will provide additional funds to help pay for it, as long as the system is designed to support social workers' automation needs to organize and record quality case information about the children and families receiving child welfare services.

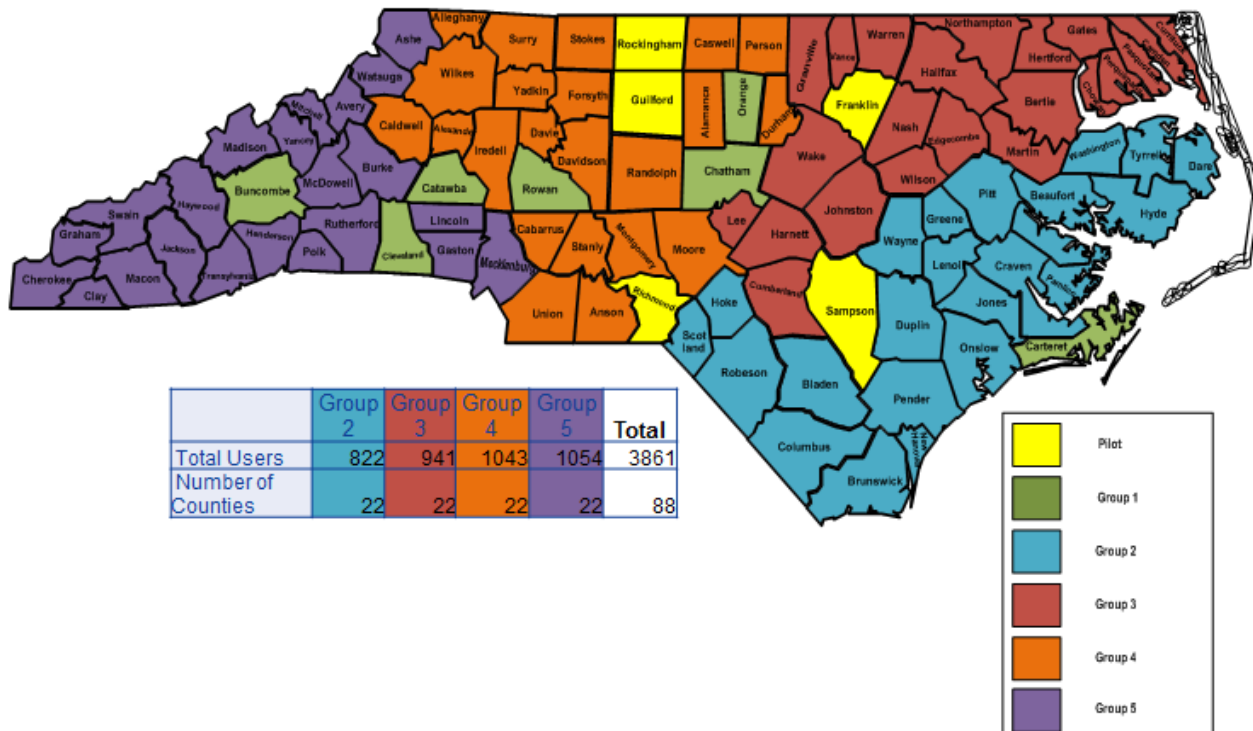
- NC FAST already meets more than 50% of the CCWIS requirements with the existing requirements.
- CCWIS compliance will provide federal funding at a 50/50 match rate.
- The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has submitted the CCWIS funding request to the federal partners, and approval is pending

Mobility Update

The project includes delivering a mobile solution that will support work outside of DHHS offices:

- Supports connected or disconnected use (a consideration for rural counties) .
- Four vendors being considered: IBM, Northwoods, Diona, and Red Mane.
- With county participation, completed the initial technical, business, and usability review for each vendor.
- Anticipate making a vendor selection in January 2017.

Deployment Plan



The Deployment Plan has been approved by the Tri-Chairs.

Next steps:

- The Deployment Plan was approved by the Executive Advisory Committee (EAC) on December 16, 2016.
- County-specific feedback and issues will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Risks

4) SECTION 12C.1.(c).4 Address any identified issues in developing or implementing the child welfare component to NC FAST and solutions to address those issues.

The project team maintains a formal “Risk Register” of risks and issues affecting the project and reviews those details along with mitigation plans on an ongoing basis. The key risks are noted below.

The approach will be to focus on “Out of the Box” functionality and minimize customizations while trying to achieve a balance between supporting NC specific requirements and minimizing the long term project cost. We will also focus on providing high value functionalities first and minimizing disruption to county operations.

Risk I: Implementation of NC FAST P4 will have a significant impact on county processes and the way county Child Welfare Social Workers and Supervisors document their cases and manage their work. This is a significant risk based on the lessons learned from previous NC FAST implementations. Today, many county child welfare programs are managed largely from paper case files. Moving to a statewide, integrated case management system will have a major impact on the way social workers document their cases, access information, and complete their required activities. Based on what we learned on previous projects, counties need time to adjust their staff and their processes to the new information system. DHHS and NC FAST need time to work with counties to identify best practices from the pilot county implementation, document these best practices, and share them with other counties before they transition to the new system.

Specific steps to mitigate this risk include having a dedicated team to work with counties to do the following:

- Explore opportunities to expose Child Welfare staff to NC FAST ahead of P4 go-live (e.g., provide Child Welfare staff with read-only access to NC FAST).
- Encourage staff to become proficient with typing ahead of NC FAST go-live (if they are primarily reliant on hand-written notes today).
- Assess impact of transition to new to-be process flow.

- With endorsement from the pilot counties, employ a phased rollout approach to deploy the system across the state.
- Review job classifications and standardize pay ranges and hiring profiles.
- Establish a staffing model to identify staffing gaps ahead of go-live.
- Ensure maximum staff availability around key deployment milestone dates.

Risk II: Currently, Child Welfare processes and procedures vary from county to county. Counties may struggle adapting to the new system unless Child Welfare processes have been standardized and the Division of Social Services has the resource capacity to support counties on the implementation of policy as recommended by the North Carolina Statewide Child Protective Services Evaluation (March 1, 2016). Mitigation steps include:

- A Simplification workgroup has been established with county representation to review and standardize the forms, notices, and requirements.
- All Simplification workgroup activities have been reported up through the Executive Advisory Subcommittee (EAS) and Executive Advisory Committee (EAC) structure and reviewed during monthly status meetings.
- A decision is to be made regarding use of the Outcome Management Structured Decision Making add-on.

Risk III: Inadequate supply of technical resources with the required specialized skills may impact the project schedule. NC FAST is proactively identifying other options to mitigate this risk. Mitigation steps include the following initiatives:

- Hire resources with pre-requisite skills and experience in advance, and provide training.
- A Training Plan has been developed to train the current and new resources with pre-requisite qualification.
- Cross training within the team.
- Re-allocation of expert resources from other NC FAST projects.
- Investigate options for recruiting qualified interns and recent NC university graduates.

Risk IV

Policy changes from Federal or State entities may impact the P4 project schedule and budget.

- Assess any policy changes if/when they occur through coordination with the state Division of Social Services (DSS).
- Follow the established Change Request process.
- Changes will be prioritized according to the business objectives of the Project.

County Participation and Involvement

5) **SECTION 12C.1.(c).5 The level of county participation and involvement in each phase of the project.**

To drive a timely and smooth implementation of NC FAST Project 4, county workers have been involved in planning and readiness preparation from the beginning of the project development lifecycle. This collaborative, transparent approach with county involvement in processes and procedures is based on the Agile Project Management process used commonly in the development of complex information technology systems.

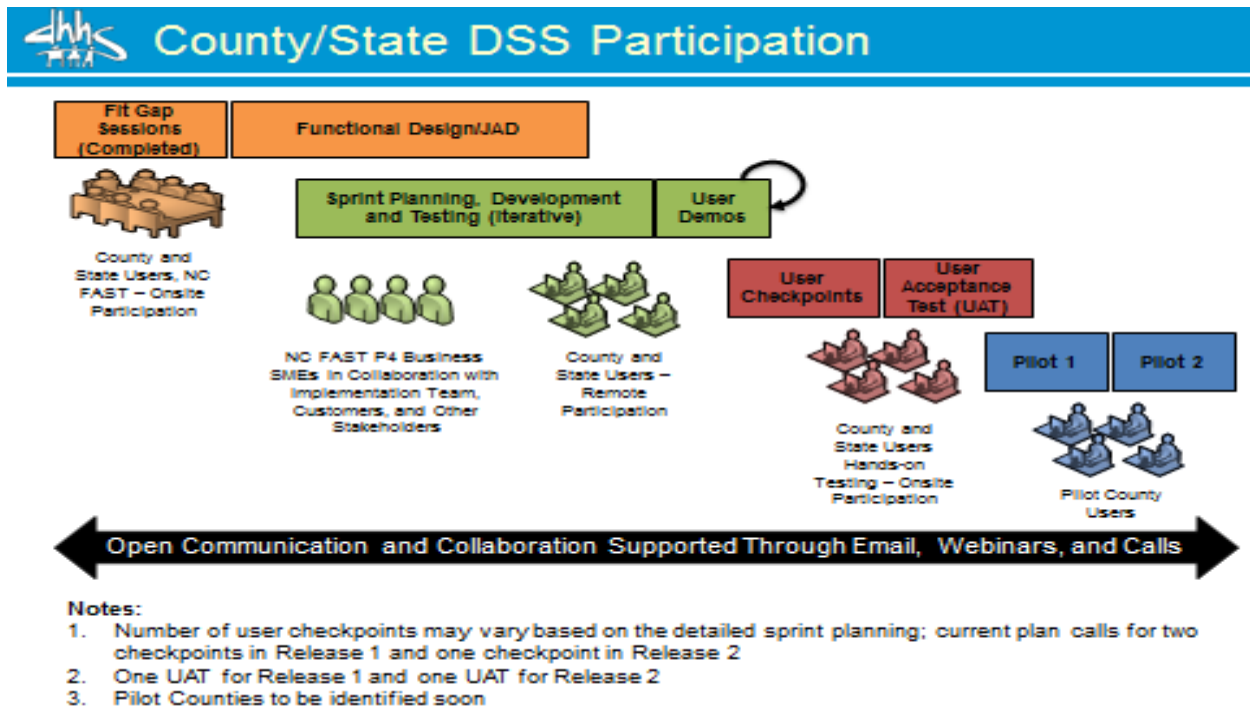
As explained previously, the Agile development approach engages with county stakeholders very early in the requirements confirmation and system design activities. The software is developed incrementally, so that functionality is demonstrated to the county representatives as the system is being built; their feedback helps to shape the design of the system as development and builds continue.

Specific county engagement activities include the following:

- In 2015, preliminary week long visits were made to four counties to gather initial information about the Child Services program. These four counties formed a representative sample of DSS agencies across the state in regards to size, current use of automation or paper based processes, existence of a local case management system, and use of the Signs of Safety practice model.
- In 2016, visits have been made to 14 counties to study as-is business processes and practices; a total of 544 business processes have been documented based on these visits. These counties were chosen because of their size (a range of small, medium, and large counties), location (counties in the eastern, western, and central parts of the state), and level of automation (a range of counties from those with no automation, to those with document management only, to those with a county case management system together with a document management system).
- Three surveys have been conducted with all 100 counties to gather information about their current technology.
- Over 60 staff from eight counties (Buncombe, Carteret, Catawba, Chatham, Cleveland, Richmond, Rowan, and Orange) are involved in the review of business system functions (BSFs) and design activities. Design activities are being expanded to include Pilot counties.
- Conducted 8 JADS (2 sets of 4), 3 User Demos, 28 User Webinars, and sent 3 customer satisfaction surveys to county participants (ongoing).
- Over 70 county staff from 30 counties are involved in seven work groups that report up to the Executive Advisory Subcommittee (EAS) and then to the Executive Advisory Committee (EAC).

- Five pilot counties (Franklin, Guilford, Richmond, Rockingham, and Sampson) will be engaged in formal hands-on checkpoint activities that review system design and development results approximately every three months.

This transparent, collaborative approach ensures that the system will provide the software tools that county DSS staff need to do their jobs more effectively and efficiently. County and state DSS participation throughout the life cycle of the project is illustrated below:



The user demonstrations, checkpoints, and user acceptance testing help the county and state users to have early exposure and hands-on experience with the new NC FAST Child Welfare system. Feedback from county participants is presented in Appendix C.

The NC FAST communication approach encourages open, two-way communication. To support this process, the NC FAST County Readiness team includes County Readiness Liaisons who will work together with County Champions and Pilot User Group members to do the following:

- Provide consistent and accurate information to targeted audiences at the proper times through engaging communication materials/resources.
- Employ multiple communication channels (e.g., newsletters, blogs, presentations, webinars, on-site visits) to share information in a timely manner with project stakeholders.

- Foster the establishment of realistic expectations about the system and related county DSS process changes.
- Define specific approaches to inform target audiences of NC FAST project scope, job/process impacts, and implementation activities and timing.
- Prepare county DSS staff for the impact the new system will have on their jobs, and equip them with the required knowledge, skills, and abilities they will need to effectively use the new system.
- Involve DHHS leadership and county DSS leadership and staff in preparation for the NC FAST implementation and related business processes impacts.
- Coordinate with Public Information Office (PIO) resources assigned to the NC FAST project to craft communications at the state and county level.

Sub-Committees

Sub-Committees under the Executive Advisory Committee (EAC) have been established that meet at least monthly to focus on addressing specific topics. These sub-committees are composed of county, state, and NC FAST project team members to ensure various stakeholder viewpoints are considered. These are the specific committees and their objectives:

- P4 Conversion – To define a strategy to prepare for the migration of active cases into NC FAST.
- Document Management – To provide an overall framework for the security of and access to documents in NC FAST.
- Simplification – To develop a consistent and standardized method of operating across counties. With county agreement, the committee achieved approximately a 40% reduction in agency forms as part of standardization.
- Mobility – To establish a statewide mobile policy, confirming mobile hardware and software standards, and providing counties with guidance about the future of NC FAST mobile computing.
- Security – To define the user security roles required to support Child Welfare operations in small, medium, and large counties.
- Data Governance – To establish who will share data across programs.
- Staffing and Capacity – Developing a tool to help counties forecast staffing and resource needs specific to the NC FAST Project 4 implementation so that they are appropriately staffed once the system goes live.

County Readiness Activities

- **Introductory Meetings:** Between September and November 2016, introductory meetings were held with leaders in each of the five pilot counties to discuss general county readiness activities, roles, and timelines.
- **County Workshops:** In February 2017, members of the County Readiness team will conduct a 1-2 day workshop with county DSS leaders.
- **Town Hall Meetings:** After the workshops have convened, a series of local and regional meetings will be held where Project 4 status and concepts will be discussed with county staff and leaders.
- **Leadership Summit:** A series of presentations was delivered by project team members, providing an update on current project status to the following committees:
 - East Region DSS Directors' Meeting
 - West Region DSS Directors' Meeting
 - Child Services Committee
 - County DSS Executive Committee
- **Webinars:** As system functions become available, members of the County Readiness team continue to make webinars available to county staff and receive feedback.
- **Identify NC FAST users:** The County Readiness team will work with DHHS and county DSS leadership to confirm NC FAST users for each system release.

For a list of county roles that interact with the project, refer to Appendix B.

To see survey results obtained from county participants in on-site joint application design (JAD) sessions, refer to Appendix C.

Budget and Expenditures

- 6) SECTION 12C.1.(c).5 Any budget and expenditure reports, including overall project budget and expenditures, and current fiscal year budget and expenditures. Overall Budget and Expenditures:

Current Fiscal Year (SFY 17) Budget and Expenditures:

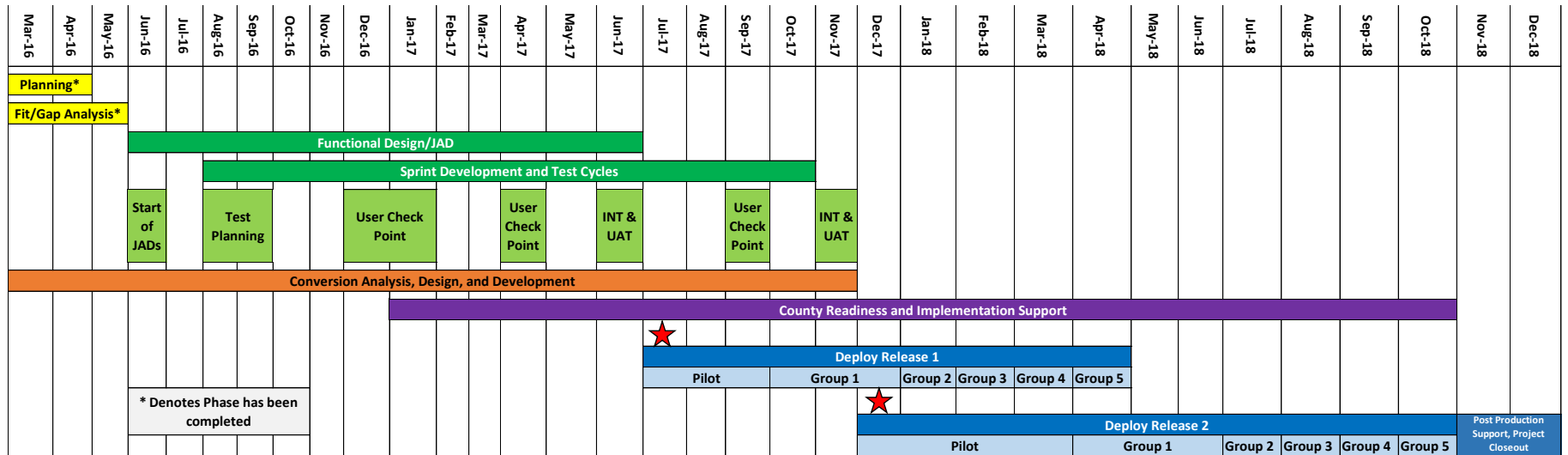
	Overall Approved Budget	Actual Expenditures as of October 2016	Approved Budget SFY 17	Actual Expenditures SFY 17
Total	\$70,080,650.72	\$9,673,105.89	\$52,079,912.16	\$5,300,666.81

Note:

1. The above approved budget is based on the initial project timeline of October 2017. The revised budget based on the updated timeline has been submitted to Federal partners for approval.
2. Expenditures as of October 2016 are understated due to the timing of contractor invoice payments..
3. The budget may be impacted by the hiring of contractor resources in place of state resources, due to delays in the state recruitment process.
4. CCWIS compliance will provide federal funding at a 50/50 match rate, pending approval.

APPENDIX A

The chart below shows the revised timeline of the project:



APPENDIX B

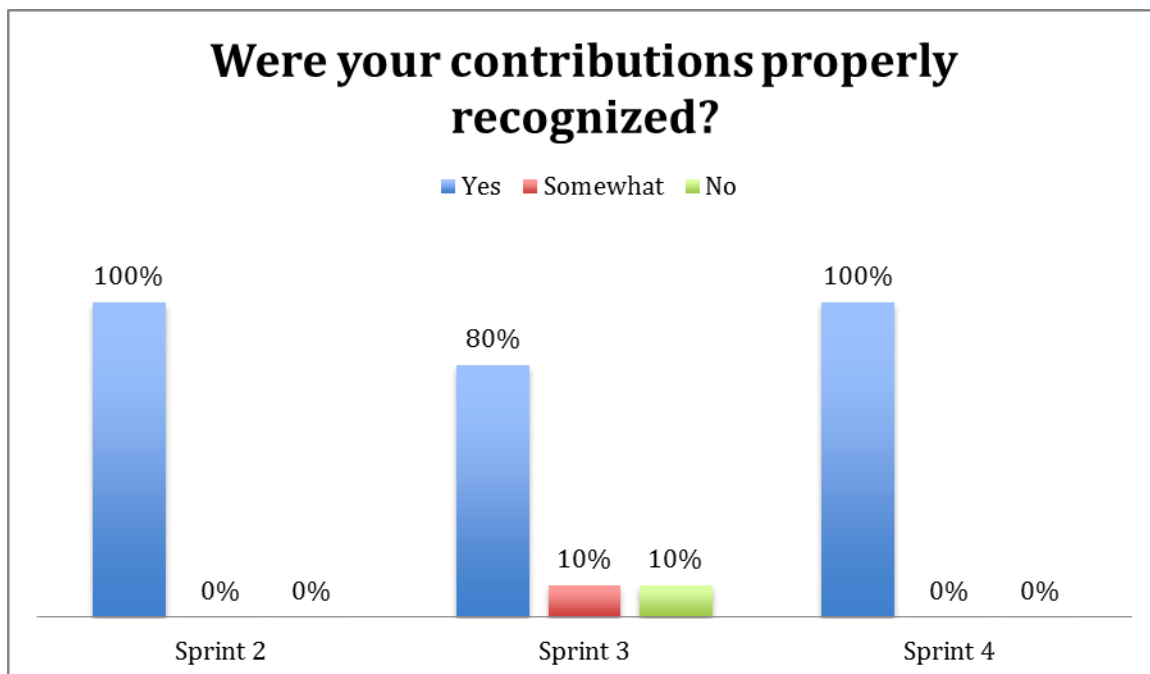
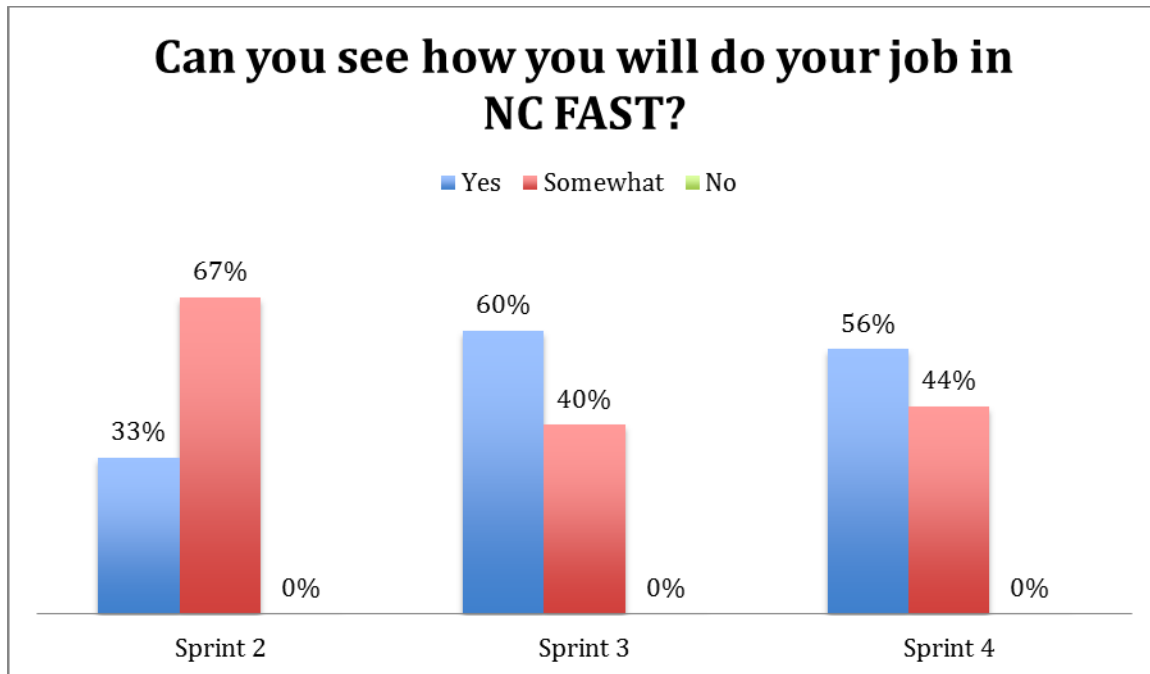
NC FAST Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Team	Description	Responsibilities
Project Leadership	DHHS, IBM, Accenture, County Directors	<p>These team members include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the Executive Advisory Committee (EAC) Members of the Executive Advisory Subcommittee (EAS) NC FAST Project Management Office (PMO) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for managing required aspects of the Implementation Continually gather status and monitor progress related to Implementation activities Manage issue resolution
Implementation Team Leadership	DHHS, Accenture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and coordinate overall implementation readiness activities within each county across all system releases Provide assistance in completing readiness assessments and county go-live procedures Provide leadership and assistance to the County Champions and County Readiness Liaisons as necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan and guide the overall Project 4 implementation in each county Develop and maintain the implementation strategy and associated work products (i.e., County Readiness Presentations, County Readiness Assessment Checklist and Tracking Log) Manage the implementation activities across Architecture & Infrastructure, Application Development, Training, Business, and Conversion teams Confirm integration and synchronization across the project teams Coordinate the resources supporting the deployment of NC FAST at each county DSS office Monitor the completion of activities across the counties Track issues and resolutions
County Readiness Liaisons	DHHS, Accenture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NC FAST County Readiness team members will be assigned one or more counties from each of the implementation phases They will guide these counties through the readiness process and promote a successful NC FAST implementation in each of their assigned counties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve as primary point of contact for County Champions in each county during deployment and funnel status, questions, and issues to the project team Review NC FAST deployment communications and be familiar with deployment schedules Deliver presentations and system demonstrations to county staff Encourage participation in NC FAST activities by all levels of county staff and leadership Work cooperatively with the NC FAST Conversion team to resolve issues as they arise Assume responsibility for an overall successful activation/installation of NC FAST for assigned counties

Role	Team	Description	Responsibilities
County Champions	County DSS Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A County Champion will be identified from each county by the County Director, as a key point of contact with the NC FAST team County Champions are a critical component to the success of NC FAST; the County Readiness team will work with each County Director to confirm County Champions identified have the necessary skills to fulfill the role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve as a primary point of contact with NC FAST project team; performs oversight of county specific installation and implementation readiness tasks, participants in issue resolution and coordinates with other appropriate county resources to complete tasks Deliver Implementation communications to the appropriate county staff (prior to, during, and after go-live) Escalate appropriate Implementation risks/issues to County Readiness Liaisons and/or Project County Readiness team Participate in creating and monitoring assigned county's Implementation Readiness Checklist Identify and address gaps resulting from the Implementation Readiness Checklist Participate and complete NC FAST training Assist in identifying training facilities and validating the availability of facilities and equipment Support, monitor, manage, and enforce the NC FAST training requirements in the county Help coordinate and provide on-site support for end users during NC FAST deployment Coordinate county activities identified as a result of Readiness Workshops Be a champion of the NC FAST project and support change within the county
County Technical Champion	County Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinates with County Champion and County Director to confirm that county DSS hardware, network, and software are ready for NC FAST deployment to the county 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve as technical point of contact to the NC FAST Implementation team; performs oversight of county technical readiness tasks, participates in issue resolution and coordinates with other appropriate county resources to complete tasks Escalate appropriate technical readiness risks/issues to County Champion and County Readiness Liaison Identify and address gaps resulting from the Implementation Readiness Checklist review meetings Be a champion of the NC FAST project and support change within the county

Role	Team	Description	Responsibilities
NC FAST Help Desk	O&M - Help Desk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary Help Desk to support pilot and phased roll-outs of NC FAST Will have a dedicated team of NC FAST Help Desk agents for Project 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide ongoing technical support, troubleshooting steps, fixes, and enhancements as needed for the county users Participate in NC FAST testing activities, as appropriate Investigate and resolve issues within the NC FAST application as they are identified Escalate issues as needed to Level 3 Help Desk for support and resolution Escalate appropriate issues to Project Management
Pilot User Group	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A group of five counties who provide input to the NC FAST project team on a variety of items based on their experience with the new system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize defects and system enhancements Review and comment on project approaches Serve as a communication conduit to the counties (both disseminating information and soliciting input from non-pilot counties) where appropriate

Appendix C – County/State DSS Survey Results from County Participants in JAD sessions:



How would you rate your overall satisfaction?

■ Excellent ■ Very Good ■ Good ■ Fair ■ Poor

