

Success Story:

PA Child Welfare Resource Center

GDC Develops New Enterprise Management System for Seamless Workshop Access



🕒 4 Min Read

The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center (PACWRC) is a collaborative effort of the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, and the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators. It was established to train direct service workers, supervisors, administrators, and foster parents in providing social services to abused and neglected children and their families. PACWRC is centrally managed and regionally administered by the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work.

The Business Need

PACWRC's existing learning management system, Encompass, was built in 2000 and in need of replacement. With only minor updates being performed since its inception, Encompass needed a complete custom redesign due to the age of the system and the retirement of their online course tie-in, Course Mill.

Replacing Encompass with a new enterprise management system (EMS) would require preserving all of Encompass's existing user functionality. In addition, the new system would add additional administrative modules for the team that transforms existing processes that were paper based into a flexible, digital workflow. PACWRC published a Request for Proposal (RFP) with an initial set of data requirements for the next stage of Encompass. Global Data Consultants, LLC (GDC) won the bid and began working on the project in late summer of 2018.

The Solution

The web application GDC designed and developed is called Bridge. It is an entirely new enterprise management system built from the ground up replicating Encompass's original functionality in a more user-friendly approach. Bridge allows PA Department of Human Services staff and the PA Children and Youth Agencies to register for workshop courses and/or series of courses on a wide variety of child welfare related topics. Each staff member's progress is tracked in the system to meet learning and development requirements.

GDC developed Bridge using React to design a single page application (SPA) mobile-friendly user interface with a .NET backend for the business logic and Microsoft SQL Server as a relational database management system that stores and retrieves data. The React SPA talks to a REST API that was built using ASP. NET Web API 2 to send and retrieve data. Those web endpoints then run all transmitted data through the business logic written with .NET, which in some instances will create or modify data in the SQL Server database. While many behind-the-scenes processes are triggered automatically during submission of new or updated data, the majority must be triggered after submission within a certain amount of time. To accomplish this requirement, GDC built a .NET console app that acts as a processor. It runs nightly, working through several jobs to update data and send out notifications.



We were seeking a user-friendly enterprise management system to enable PACWRC to seamlessly schedule workshops in the backend and allow our front-end users to manage their own accounts including workshop registration. Working collaboratively with GDC, Bridge was developed with a self-service approach to workshop registration, giving back valuable time to our employees.

Heather Doyle
Technology Specialist, PACWRC

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The Results

PACWRC's Bridge EMS was released into production in January 2021. Users of the system can self-register for course workshops and conferences, earning certifications and continuing education credits upon completion. The system tracks and presents their current registrations, completed workshops, certification completion progress, and upcoming events in a user-friendly dashboard. Agencies across Pennsylvania can use Bridge to manage their employees. Agency administrators can add new employees, update employee demographics, review workshop registrations and certifications. Additionally, they can register and cancel workshops on behalf of their agency employees. Agency administrators also have access to a dashboard with an approval queue which allows them to transfer employees to another agency, approve new user accounts, and approve certification completions.

Bridge Administrators within PACWRC now have an entirely digital process for managing full cycle workflows - including users, agencies, instructors, locations, workshops and conferences, course offerings, primary and secondary course competencies, learning objectives, and pre-requisites. They are even able to link state laws, bulletins, and other supplemental material directly to courses. Administrators can also set up an entire series of courses that grant certifications upon completion.

Course Instructors can now create a profile to be added to the details of workshop listings. Instructors can also manage their insurance, allowing PACWRC to have an up-to-date copy available for their records, and view the history of previously taught workshops. An Instructor Survey built within Bridge notifies PACWRC of which courses they would like to instruct, the regions and/or locations they will travel to, and their availability to streamline scheduling. If Bridge Administrators assign an instructor to a workshop, the instructor must approve or reject the request from their own approval queue.

GDC's experience in React and responsive web design provided the modern look and feel PACWRC requested fostering in the next stage of training for direct service workers, supervisors, administrators, and foster parents to provide social services to abused and neglected children and their families. As a Microsoft Gold Partner, GDC built a product that would run on their existing infrastructure, allowing them to host and manage the site internally at PACWRC facilities. As an experienced enterprise solution provider, GDC had the resources and knowledge to handle a project of this scale. GDC continues to provide monthly support for Bridge.

