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Organizations spend millions of dollars building data warehouses, but as many as 50 to 80 percent of those projects fail. Most often they fizzle because planners and participants lack a clear understanding of why access to integrated information is valuable and how the combined information will be used. This astounding failure rate brings home the point that organizations must fully research and understand their business issues, policy environment, and information needs before attempting to build a sophisticated technology solution.

CTG's two-year Using Information in Government (UIG) Program recognizes that information is a valuable governmental asset and explores ways public sector agencies can best conduct information-intensive work. The UIG Program involves projects with seven New York state and local agencies to examine the policy, organizational, management, and financial factors that shape government's ability to get full value out of the information it collects, creates, and maintains. Those seven New York agencies are:

- Office of the State Comptroller, Division of Municipal Affairs
- Central New York Psychiatric Center
- Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Bureau of Shelter Services
- Office of Real Property Services
- Office of the State Comptroller
- Department of Transportation
- New York City Department of Telecommunications and Information Technology

The results of these projects, all of which will be finished by June 2000, will be shared in the UIG Resource Kit-a Web- based collection of materials that will provide advice, experience, tools, techniques, and guidelines to help government managers become more effective information users.

By working with the NYS Bureau of Shelter Services on the Homeless Information Management System integrated data repository, CTG developed a model of the issues involved in this type of project. Data repositories usually integrate disparate sources of data to evaluate the impact of a set of programs and services on a specific population. The success of such repositories requires solving issues about: the intersection of programs and services, business drivers, data compatibility, technology choices, and the policy environment. Such systems are built on a foundation of leadership, sponsorship, partnerships, and common vision. The interorganizational nature of HIMS made these issues particularly critical.

The prototype process showed BSS and homeless service providers that a tool such as HIMS could be developed to provide them with the information they need to track homelessness and more effectively manage and evaluate the diverse services delivered to the homeless population. It also demonstrated that many critical factors must be addressed.

The prototyping process involved intense investigation into the policy, management, and technology barriers encountered when integrating multiple sources of data into a single repository designed to support system-wide assessments of services, as well as the changes required to overcome those barriers.