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The state of Florida launched a new website to support its hundreds of thousands of unemployed residents in October 2013. But according to a February 28, 2015 article in the Miami Herald newspaper, the state's auditor general issued a rather scathing report the day before criticizing the CONNECT system, adding to the already existing pile of evidence that the system is in a state of chaos.

The CONNECT system is currently running a price tag of \$77 million, more than \$14 million more than the previous estimate. The CONNECT system is managed by the state of Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO).

The audit, conducted between February 24, 2014 and June 30, 2014, covered a time period when 500,000 unemployment claims were processed. The audit revealed several areas of concern such as:

- **Security:** Claimants were required to use their Social Security numbers to log on in violation of state law and exposing users to unnecessary risks.
- **Timeliness:** The DEO may have broken federal laws by not paying or resolving claims in a timely manner. The audit found that 44% of over 400,000 documents being processed as of June 30, 2014 were in the "unidentified" queue. The DEO had no procedures on how to handle unidentified documents in a timely manner.
- **Accuracy:** The CONNECT system itself repeatedly entered wrong data on documents such as inaccurate postmarks on documents which could help negate a legitimate claim. Other cross-checks to prevent the inaccurate entry of data were not in place, the result being the increased odds of incorrect cancellation or overpayment of a claim.
- **Fraud:** Because of loose safeguards over 20,000 potentially illegible claims were paid between March 1, 2014 and June 30, 2014.

As a software, operations, and anti-fraud professional I am aghast at the gaping holes that were overlooked. Pick any small off-the-shelf accounting software application such as QuickBooks® and you will find more data integrity features and checks-and-balances apparently beyond what the CONNECT system has embedded in its design.

The fact that tax dollars – my tax dollars – are being spent on such a disaster causes me more dismay, let alone the reality that it is running more than 20% over budget and will apparently need more money to fix the numerous problems the audit uncovered.

What makes this all the more egregious is that it is unemployed folks – people who really need their money on a tight timely basis – who are relying on this broken system.

Thinking through possibilities, examining all of the angles, stepping through the processes, worrying about what might fall through the cracks: these are the things that I consider on each and every project I work on for my clients. It is too bad the designers of CONNECT couldn't connect the dots on this project, and it's the taxpayers and unemployed claimants who are left to unnecessarily suffer for it.

It seems that the state of Florida just can't manage to CONNECT to its unemployed.

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