

NEWS

FIA Executive Deputy Commissioner Seth Diamond and MIS Deputy Commissioner Richard Siemer Lead HRA Staff Winning NYC Excellence in Technology Awards

New York City's Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT) held its 2008 Excellence in Technology Awards Program (ETAP) on Thursday, November 6 at the Brooklyn Marriot Hotel. DoITT Commissioner Paul J. Cosgrove presided.

ETAP recognizes information technology professionals in New York City government organizations for their outstanding work and contributions. Candidates for ETAP awards are nominated by their agency directors and chosen by the ETAP screening committee. Each agency is limited to one award in each category.



Seth Diamond

This year ETAP recognized four HRA professionals for the impact of their work: Seth Diamond, executive deputy commissioner of the Family Independence Administration (FIA) Richard Siemer, deputy commissioner of Management Information Systems (MIS), Michael Baker, director of Data Base Administration, and Sudershan Reddy Vaddi, senior network and data security specialist.

As executive deputy commissioner of FIA, Seth Diamond has been the primary sponsor of technology initiatives that have enabled development of the Model Office, expanded access to food stamps, technology-based work stations for staff, and online collaboration with community partners. He has been resourceful in acquiring the funding and resources to implement HRA's technology innovations.

[Read more about FIA initiatives accomplished with Mr. Diamond's sponsorship.](#)

In his 27-year career, Mr. Siemer has played a leading role in the ongoing development of management information systems and applications that have resulted in powerful work advantages to HRA and its partners and has propelled HRA into a leadership position among City agencies. [Read more about MIS initiatives accomplished under Mr. Siemer.](#)



Richard Siemer

Michael Baker won the award in the category of managerial excellence. He oversees senior administrators of the HRA citywide databases, which are structured collections of records or data stored in computers to facilitate the processing of updates and information retrieval. Among the accomplishments achieved under his leadership has been the centralization of field office data bases into the Paperless Office System (POS), which serves one million people at 60 service sites around the city.



Sudershan Reddy Vaddy

Sudershan Reddy Vaddy won the award for IT support and service by a staff member. He was recognized for his ability in his work as network and data security specialist to successfully coordinate timely solutions to end user difficulties that require a high level of technical response. "His resolutions meet the needs of users and security requirements and have often meant the difference between success and failure in program operations," Chief Security Officer Jon Miller said.

HRA wishes to thank the ETAP honorees for the innovations to the way in which we work and for results powerfully improved through technology.

Commissioner's Award for Technology-Driven Business Transformation



Seth Diamond, Human Resources Administration (HRA)

Seth Diamond has over a 12-year history of sponsoring the primary information technology initiatives of the Human Resources Administration. As the Executive Deputy Commissioner of the Family Independence Administration (FIA), he is in charge of approximately 8,000 staff members across 100 locations. Mr. Diamond has been the primary sponsor of a number of technology initiatives that have increased food stamp accessibility in the community. Inventive in his conception, design, and planning for these projects, the Executive Deputy Commissioner has been exceptionally resourceful in acquiring funding and resources. Mr. Diamond has successfully obtained USDA grants and other funding streams that have enabled HRA to implement creative technology innovations.

For instance, Mr. Diamond played an integral role in the development of the Model Office, one of the primary customer-facing initiatives in HRA, which has outfitted Job Centers and Food Stamp Offices with kiosks, LEDs, and ticket printers to efficiently move clients through processing. The Model Office Number Identification Queue (MONIQ), the client tracking system, works in conjunction with the Front Door Reception Information system to track each client's service status, manage traffic flow, and monitor wait time. MONIQ also utilizes the LED screens to display the ticket numbers of clients being served as well as those who have been previously called but not yet responded. In addition, clients can use the kiosks to retrieve eligibility information prior to meeting with a counselor, ensuring an even more orderly flow through the centers.

In addition to promoting the use of technology within HRA, Mr. Diamond has partnered with other Health and Human Services agencies to share data that will ultimately benefit the citizenry. One such project has been coordinated with the Department of Correction, in which Mr. Diamond led an effort to ensure that the not-for-profit organization responsible for processing inmates' releases would conduct food stamp processing immediately upon an inmate's return to society. By guiding individuals to self-sufficiency immediately upon release, this effort helped reduce recidivism in the jails.

Similarly, Mr. Diamond guided HRA in its collaboration with numerous community organizations to improve access to the Food Stamp program. Last year, HRA implemented ground-breaking technology in Food Stamp offices, food pantries, and soup kitchens to enable its community partners to assist potentially eligible individuals and families with applications for the program. These locations, due to their primary function of just providing food, often required the use of mobile technology such as laptops and wireless connectivity in order to provide the same services that would previously have been available only in a Food Stamp office. This initiative removed barriers for clients in establishing eligibility for food stamps, accelerating their receipt of much needed assistance.

Collaborating once again with a community-based organization, Mr. Diamond ensured that the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty's One-Stop service registration site included the processing of Food Stamp applications. Citizens can now provide their eligibility information only once to be processed for all appropriate City services.

In all of these initiatives, a key component to lightening the burden of the Food Stamp application process has been the use of imaging. Diamond has supported the imaging project since the inception of the Paperless Office System many years ago. This project enabled the clients to provide their supporting documentation only once. By scanning and committing these documents to HRA's imaging system, they become available for any subsequent appointments that clients might have. The constant access to this information has eased the application process immeasurably; a precursor to the functionality envisioned for the City's HHS-Connect initiative.

In keeping with the current direction of NYC agencies today, HRA has been a leader of using technology to provide customer-centric methods for New York's citizenry to be able to determine their eligibility for and collect much needed benefits. Seth Diamond has been instrumental in such technology-based initiatives throughout his tenure at HRA. Seth Diamond's vision and expertise have had a transformative effect on the "business" of providing social services in New York City. Through his efforts, HRA's employees are now equipped with state-of-the-art tools to process clients' applications in order to provide them the benefits for which they qualify in the most effective and efficient means possible.

Demonstrated Leadership in Management of Information Technology



Richard Siemer, Human Resources Administration (HRA)

Beginning in 1981 with his employment in the Office of Systems Planning, Richard Siemer has consistently proven his dedication to the public sector throughout his 27-year career. He played an integral part in the ongoing development of the management information systems in the Human Resource Administration through his work on the implementation of the Welfare Management System (WMS) – a centralized computer system for human services clients – in the late 1980s. In 1989, Mr. Siemer became the Director of Information Systems in the Office of Revenue and Investigation (ORI), rising to the level of Assistant Deputy Commissioner for ORI's Revenue and Systems Division. Under his direction, the Agency developed applications to improve data collection processes and increase revenue, leading to improved processes at other City agencies, such as the Comptroller's Office, the Law Department, and the Office of Court Administration.

Richard Siemer was then appointed Deputy Commissioner and CIO for HRA's Management Information Systems (MIS). In this capacity, Mr. Siemer's talents pushed MIS into a leadership position among City agencies. HRA's MIS division provides computer support to an employee population of over 14,000 and a client population of over three million, utilizing leading edge technology to offer an array of services to the City's citizens in need. HRA's MIS division also supported other agencies, such as the Administration for Children's Services, the Department of Youth & Community Development, and the HHS - Connect initiative for Health and Human Services.

Mr. Siemer's ability to lead collaborative operational teams and program staff has contributed to the successful implementation of HRA's Model Office. A major objective of the Model Offices is to provide a customer service area that streamlines processing times. The technology for these offices involves innovative use of hardware such as kiosks, message boards, electronic directories, and software for scheduling and the directing of client flow. Without his extraordinary management skills and ability to motivate his staff, these exceptional products could not have been delivered within their demanding timeframes.

Mr. Siemer's responsibilities also extend to the support of voice telephone related activities, where he has instituted new and innovative applications, like the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) technology. IVR has enabled customers and vendors to access information and make inquiries regarding the status of applications for services. Information lines and help desks offer these services in multiple languages. In addition, day-care vendors can submit attendance via telephone, facilitating their billing and payment processes. Mr. Siemer was honored for these innovations by the State's Public Welfare Association. Mr. Siemer has also worked tirelessly to roll out Voice-Over IP (VOIP) to all HRA locations – accruing significant cost savings to the city in telephone expenditures.

CITY OF NEW YORK 2008 EXCELLENCE IN TECHNOLOGY AWARDS PROGRAM

The Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW) provides HRA's business users extensive reporting, querying, and analysis capabilities, which support Agency operations and enhance financial claiming and auditing functions. Through these efforts, revenue accruals and cost avoidance have exceeded \$100 million.

Richard Siemer embodies the qualities this Award seeks to honor. He is an extraordinarily talented individual with a strong sense of integrity and is well respected by his colleagues in the City, the State, and across the country. Mr. Siemer has recently been asked to serve as a Regional Representative to the American Public Human Services Association's IT affiliate, a national network of State and local CIO's with a mission to collaborate and share IT technology solutions for human services programs across the country. The Excellence in Technology Award Program is honored to recognize Richard Siemer for his consistent level of achievement and many contributions to the strengthening of service delivery capacity in New York City.

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