

WorkForce Central Gains Autonomy, Time with New Fund Accounting System

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CPA, CFP
WorkForce Central



Tacoma, Wash.-based WorkForce Central – also known as the Tacoma-Pierce County Employment & Training Consortium – is a unique partnership of government, business, education, and community organizations that has been providing Pierce County with quality workforce development services since 1982.

For years, the organization’s accounting was managed through the city’s accounting system.

“We took in the data, but they did all the processing,” explains Lance Mertz, CPA, WorkForce Central’s CFO. “We had very limited access to the SAP system, which doesn’t adapt well to fund accounting. There were all sorts of issues. Financial reporting was especially problematic.”

In early 2009, WorkForce Central’s CEO and interim CFO (at the time) decided to find a new system. They considered multiple products, but ultimately decided on a remotely hosted version of Sage MIP Fund Accounting from Sage North America, which they purchased from NonProfit Technologies, Inc.

Hosted System Works ‘Anywhere’

Mertz joined WorkForce Central as CFO in June 2009 – a few months after the new system had been implemented.

“We now have a fully integrated, hosted accounting system,” he says. “As long as the internet connection is adequate, the

system works anywhere. Plus, we don’t have to worry about installing updates, performing back-ups, or caring for the server. Everything is done for one price per year.”

The organization has no in-house IT staff, so “the payback is immediate with hosting,” says Mertz.

A Different World

With the previous system, WorkForce Central was unable to produce good revenue and expenditure reports, trial balances, and other information. Now, its accountants are self-sufficient.

The organization is in the middle of its first audit under the new system, and its outside accountant is “very happy “with the results.

“The system has taken us away from spreadsheet accounting,” explains Mertz. “We previously had a very difficult time showing an adequate audit trail.”

With the new accounting system, Mertz can run a report in multiple ways, spanning different time periods and breaking out activities as needed. “The database ability and real-time results have made the system more than pay for itself,” he says.

One favorite feature of WorkForce Central’s new accounting system: it

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provides functionality beyond traditional “reports-only” viewing, extending “read only” access to data for select staff.

“Executives like this feature a lot, because they can pull up reports when they need them, without having to call accounting staff,” says Mertz. “Our offices are spread across five sites, so it’s very beneficial for executives to be able to get what they need, no matter where they are physically located.”

The payroll process has also been improved by the new accounting system, because it quickly and easily allocates labor to all of WorkForce Central’s various grants and activities. The allocation process used to be more labor-intensive.

Mertz concludes, “Before, we were very limited in our access to data. With this new system, we have complete control and visibility. It’s a different world.”

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