Description

Idaho Housing and Finance Association (IHFA) administers multiple HUD housing-related grant programs. The organization is responsible for distributing federal money to need-based recipients for these programs.   The Grant Programs Department at IHFA consists of 20 hardworking team members who work on these grants daily.   IHFA receives administrative fees from these grants. The need to accurately track the exact amount of time spent on the individual grants and the respective projects was discussed and a "time-tracking" program was developed through collaboration between Human Resources, Information Technology, and the Grant Programs departments.   Human Resources is responsible for giving the salary and cost distribution to the Grants Department so it can charge against the various grants in an exact method. Before the "Time Tracker Software System," Human Resources and the Grant Programs departments were unable to give exact documented hours spent on administrative aspects of these grants and were unable to accurately break out the time to individual projects funded by the grants.   Now, IHFA has the ability to charge exact time to individual projects, which keeps administrative funding available longer.   The company no longer relies on projections. Another benefit of the system is better business management and increased productivity.

Background

The initial reason that the time-tracking system was implemented was to accurately identify the time charged to each program in the Grant Programs Department. IHFA receives a set amount of funding for the time spent on its many grant programs but was not charging against each specific program. Instead, it was charging all the time toward administrative fees. When IHFA exhausted a grant's allowable administrative dollars, the company had to pay the overage. To accurately charge against the program, IHFA needed to identify how much time was used and to which project that time was tied to. For fiscal year 2012, after implementing the time-tracking system, about $100,000 was charged to specific programs, leaving that amount in the administrative funding to be used at a later time. IHFA expects this amount to increase over the next year as staff becomes better at allocating their time.

How does it work?

Staff members working on the various grants record the actual time they spend on administering the different programs through this internal system.   Employees log in to the program daily to enter the time they spend working on each separate grant program and can break out how much time they spend on each activity that is chargeable to that grant.   Employees can choose the program they spend time on, the activity that is involved, and choose a subcategory. The program is the name of the grant; the activity is either administrative time or project time; and the subcategories consist of monitoring, grant writing, underwriting, etc.

The next step is completed by the payroll analyst in Human Resources, who uses the "report" feature of the time-tracking system. The analyst can opt to run a report on either an individual or group. The program (individual or all) and time frame (daily, monthly, etc.), are exported to Excel, PDF, or Word. Then, a report is generated with the employee name, employee number, activity subcategory, date, hours, and notes. The payroll analyst then reorganizes the data to determine the time spent on each activity by its specific grant program. The analyst uses the salary and benefit load of each employee so it can be divided into the correct allocation of time spent on each activity, giving an accurate amount that should be charged to either administrative or project fees.

What has it accomplished?

In January 2012, new allocations for the HOME program were received from HUD, which included a 40 percent reduction in administration fees. Because of IHFA's new time-tracking system, the loss was not as significant because of the accurate accounting of wages allocated to project fees. The system has given IHFA an easy way to save administrative dollars.

The time-tracking system has also afforded improvements for managing the business. The manager of the Grants Department now can see how much time it is actually taking to work on each project and can move around employees to better meet the needs of administering each program. It also allows the manager to monitor employees and time spent on tasks. If more than one employee is working on a similar project, the manager can see if there is a discrepancy in the amount of time it takes for one employee versus another. This has increased productivity.

Why it is Meritorious and Meets NCSHA Award Judging Criteria

Innovative:

There are grant software programs available to track time. Unfortunately, what is available off the shelf is expensive and does not work with IHFA's systems. Much time and effort was spent to create a system that electronically interfaces between employees entering their time and IHFA's payroll system through its Human Resource Information System (HRIS).

Replicable:

As IHFA rolled out the new system on a particular grant, it quickly expanded the use of the system to its other grant programs. The company now has 16 grant programs that are using the time-tracking system. IHFA is expanding the system and other departments are beginning to use it as well in an effort to track productivity. One of the next phases to be implemented with the system is charging time that an employee in one department spends on another department's work to the appropriate department, helping with more exact budgeting and charge-backs to and from departments.

Other HFAs administering federal housing grants need to use some type of system to accurately track time to get the best use of administrative fees. If the organization is small, chances are an expensive software program is available that has to be purchased that automatically and exactly tracks time spent on administering the grants. IHFA had to create its own system because the software that is available would not work for our organization and was expensive. This is something that other HFAs can do through collaboration with their Human Resources, IT, and Grants departments. It is inexpensive, reliable, and easy to use.

Responds to a management challenge or opportunity:

HUD requires that time be tracked for programs that the company administers. The time-tracking system has allowed IHFA to be confident that it is submitting accurate data for administrative fees and program fees.

Achieves measurable improvements in agency operations:

We saw immediate efficiency in the use of administrative fees because we could accurately track time for either administrative or project costs. In the past fiscal year, $100,000 was correctly allocated to programs, leaving those dollars in administrative funding to be used in the future. We are making better use of our administrative fees now that we can be exact about work time and how it is expended.

Provides benefits that outweigh costs:
The expense and effort necessary to enter and manage the time-tracking system does not come close to the amount of money that is saved from charging more exact documented time to the programs. IHFA is now able to justify the need for the grant dollars we request in an accurate and factual way.

Demonstrates effective use of resources:
Using an in-house program has met IHFA's need for accurate time tracking and has improved our use of federal resources. The company was able to determine everything required for the various programs and made productivity changes as needed. The collaboration between Human Resources, IT, and Grants allowed us to develop an efficient system.

Achieves strategic objectives:
One of IHFA's operating principles and values is, "We will be accountable for our results." With the implementation of the time-tracking system, IHFA is confident in the validity of the time that it is reporting for administrative and program fees.
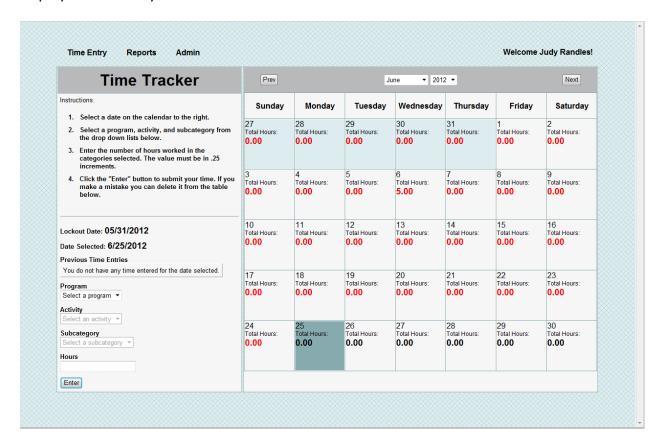
Conclusion
IHFA is proud of the accurate reporting that it has for its federal programs because of the new time-tracking system. The system has made considerable improvements and efficiencies in the operations at IHFA with its grant programs.

Attachments
Federal Programs Time-Tracking System Employee Time Entry
Sample Department Report Generated by Time-Tracking System
Sample Individual Report from Payroll Analyst
Sample Summary of Department Total Allocations by Payroll Analyst

Attachment 1

Federal Programs Time-Tracking System
Employee Time Entry

Attachment 2
Sample Department Report Generated by Time-Tracking System

Attachment 3
Sample Individual Report from Payroll Analyst

Name	Employee Number	Program Name	Additional Program Data	Activity Name	Additional Activity Data	Subcategory Name	Additional Subcategory Data	Date	Hours
XXX	XX	HOME		Administration	updates to ACCESS	Coordination	updates to ACCESS	5/1/2012	4.75
XXX	XX	HOME		Administration	HOME Mtg	Coordination	HOME Mtg	5/2/2012	1.50
XXX	XX	HOME		Project	1234	Underwriting / Loan Processing		5/2/2012	6.50
XXX	XX	HOME		Administration	AUR mtg	Coordination	AUR mtg	5/3/2012	1.00
XXX	XX	HOME		Administration	updates to ACCESS	Coordination	updates to ACCESS	5/3/2012	1.75
XXX	XX	HOME		Project	1234	Underwriting / Loan Processing		5/3/2012	5.25
XXX	XX	HOME		Project	1234	Underwriting / Loan Processing		5/4/2012	7.25

Attachment 4
Sample Summary of Department Total Allocations by Payroll Analyst

May Grants Costs – All Employees		
Program	**Activity**	**Amount**
ESG	Administration	xxx.xx
HIRC	Administration	xxx.xx
HOME	Administration	xxx.xx
HOME	Project	xxx.xx
HMIS	Balance of State CoC	xxx.xx
HMIS	Boise CoC	xxx.xx
HMIS	Statewide	xxx.xx
HMIS	HPRP	xxx.xx
HMIS	VA	xxx.xx
HOPWA	Administration	xxx.xx
HPRP	Administration	xxx.xx
HPRP	Data Collection & Evaluation	xxx.xx
IHFA	Administration	xxx.xx
NSP	Administration	xxx.xx
NSP3	Administration	xxx.xx
SHP	Administration	xxx.xx
SPC	Administration	xxx.xx
	Department Totals	xxx.xx