Management Innovation: Technology
Data Management System

Overview: Our portfolio includes the traditional programs of a housing finance authority, such as rental housing tax credits or mortgage revenue bonds. Yet, as the Indiana Housing *and Community Development* Authority (IHCDA), we manage over 26 programs to also address issues of homelessness and to support community development activities throughout the state; among the fifty states, few cover a similar breadth of programs. IHCDA is responsible for managing:

- Indiana's allocation of Emergency Shelter Grant and Shelter Plus Care dollars;
- The Neighborhood Assistance Program (a state tax credit designed to facilitate donations to community development-oriented not-for-profits);
- The Affordable Housing and Community Development Fund (a trust fund supported by a dedicated revenue source at $5 million to $6 million per year), which may be used for a range of both housing and community development activities; and
- Indiana's Individual Development Account program, which has helped Indiana families to save over $2.7 million, generating assets worth nearly $30 million and leveraging new income estimated at $7 million per year;
- The Weatherization Assistance Program (which is slated to receive $131 million in 2009 and 2010 as a result of ARRA, in addition to our usual annual allocation of about $11 million);
- Community Service Block Grant (which has also received a one-time $14 million infusion from ARRA in addition to our usual annual $10 million allocation);
- The Low-Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program ($103.7 million in FFY 2009); and
- Indiana's non-entitlement city allocation of HOME and HOPWA dollars, as well as a portion of Indiana's non-entitlement city allocation of CDBG, all totaling about $36.4 million.

Given this expansive brief, one of our greatest challenges has been managing the flow of information to and from executives, managers and staff within IHCDA as well as our funding recipients, financial institution partners, and other state agencies.   An equal challenge was the variety of disparate—and sometimes redundant—reporting requirements and compliance thresholds for funding recipients who worked with different departments within IHCDA. The Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority developed its Data Management System (DMS) to facilitate manager and executive access to critical data for timely decisions and to facilitate the flow of information between departments. With the implementation of DMS, IHCDA seized the opportunity not only to determine the most effective mechanisms to manage data but also to facilitate cross-departmental communication and cooperation.

Beginning with an exhaustive survey of user needs, our consulting firm interviewed IHCDA staff, borrowers/grantees, partner lenders, and government agencies with which we work extensively (including HUD, local PHAs, and the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs). Moreover, the consultants facilitated meetings between staff from different departments to discuss common information needs and to identify where information was not as effectively communicated. The result was an organization-wide system built upon the procedures and requirements of the development cycle, but also improved communication between departments as every IHCDA staffer (and external partner) receives and transmits the information needed.

Through this process, IHCDA identified the following challenges as well as potential solutions as a result of employing DMS:

Challenge	Solution and Benefits
Inefficient delivery of timely information and data to and from funding recipients	Streamlined and structured processes, improving both efficiency and responsiveness of requests for data and reporting.
Inefficient tracking of program awards, compliance, claims and disbursements	Reduced duplicate data entry allowing resources to be devoted to managing programs.
Difficulty managing rapid growth of individual programs	Improved contract creation and management capacities.
No central location to store project information, which means program team members—particularly from different departments—cannot find the information they need.	Project workspaces for collaboration and storage of program information, improving intra-departmental and interdepartmental communication.
Increased regulatory reporting and compliance reporting, with a focus on maintaining compliance rather than on strategically leveraging resources to create a measurable impact.	Easier access to program details, along with real-time management reporting via a dashboard that summarizes critical information, allowing for timely and effective strategic decisions.
High error rates due to manual data entry.	Automation of administrative tasks required for program management, reducing opportunity for human error.

The resulting system offered the following modules:

Component	Purpose
SMART CLIENT	For use by IHCDA staff, this module is designed to facilitate award management, monitoring and claims processing. This module reduces our reliance upon paper claims and documentation, allowing us to both reduce our use of paper and process disbursements more quickly.
WEBSITE	Through a web interface with DMS, funding recipients can submit monitoring data, claim documentation and closeout information. Again, this reduces our use of paper and allows for more timely communication of information, allowing us to make more timely decisions.
DASHBOARD	For IHCDA staff use, the Dashboard offers access to executive level summary data along with detailed program level reporting, all delivered automatically and in the format required. Senior managers can quickly access reliable data regarding any program within the organization and easily compare current performance to benchmarking information, including timeliness of claim payment, number of non-compliance issues documented and resolved, or progress against individual construction schedules.
CUSTOMER RELATIONS	Finally, the Customer Relations module allows IHCDA staff to track correspondence with awardees, share awardee contact information and track task completion and follow-up through an interface with Outlook. Perhaps one of our most critical DMS tools, our Customer Relations module vastly facilitates both communication of issues from funding recipients and from customers of projects developed by funding recipients; this allows us to resolve inquiries quickly and thoroughly, since all the necessary facts are easily at hand.

As a result of these efforts (and a complementary initiative to scan IHCDA documents and store image files in a central database), IHCDA has:

- Vastly streamlined reporting and annual certification processes for owners of rental housing tax credit properties;
- Simplified operations within IHCDA;
- Vastly reduced agency use of paper records and correspondence and made great strides toward our ultimate goal of establishing and maintaining a paperless office (no mean feat for an HFA);
- Reduced printing and reproduction costs by facilitating online access to documents for all interested parties; and
- Facilitated interaction and cooperation between departments, a trend which continues as IHCDA develops its strategic plan for the next five years through a series of interdepartmental planning teams;
- Identified opportunities for cross-funding through dashboard data that summarizes the status of complementary programs on a real-time basis; for example, through our strategic planning process, we are examining the prospect of providing funding for owner-occupied repair and business façade renovation in the immediate area of rental housing tax credit projects to take advantage of synergies between the programs for greater impact.

The Data Management System has demonstrated the potential for effective data tracking and reporting to not only improve compliance and data-sharing, but also to facilitate both cross-departmental collaboration and communication between executive level staff, management level staff and line staff. As such, it has had a transformative effect on our organization and serves as a compelling example of the immense power of good information. In fact, IHCDA has already received requests for replication of the system from other jurisdictions, suggesting that the challenges that inspired us to embark on this endeavor were more common than we thought.