

Case Study:

Outdated, paper-based systems replaced in Clark County, Washington

Needs analysis: The use of spreadsheets, paper ledgers and home grown electronic forms for construction management was resulting in inconsistent formats between projects. While auditing requirements were being met, information was difficult to access and generating pay estimates was time-consuming. *Product implemented:* FieldManager. *Results:* Simple estimation, instant data retrieval, clear inspector's daily reports, easy progress estimate payments, and an overall improvement in the professionalism and accuracy of documents. Plus, an increase in efficiency is evident.

"We are very confident that our project engineers and inspectors are spending much less time calculating pay items, for instance, and can spend more time inspecting and coordinating the work," Gray said.

"This product has greatly enhanced the professionalism and consistency of our contract administration at the county. The easy access to information has improved communication among our staff, as well as enhancing our credibility with contractors. As a program manager, the ability to determine project status and budget information at the click of a mouse is extremely beneficial."

- Kevin Gray
Capital Program Manager
Clark County Department of
Public Works



Clark County is in one of the fastest growing regions in the state of Washington and in the Portland metropolitan area. Its population has nearly doubled in the last 25 years. Named for Captain William Clark of the famous Lewis and Clark expedition duo, Clark County is now home to 383,000 citizens.

As growth in Clark County ensued, the demand for new roadways and maintenance of existing roadways grew as well. The Department of Public Works had an existing system for construction management that relied on paper forms, home grown electronic forms that were difficult to use, a paper ledger, and a spreadsheet system. It was described as "labor intensive."

"While the system had been successful and endorsed through numerous audits, it did not provide easy access to information, or allow simple preparation of pay estimates," said Kevin Gray, capital program manager. "Furthermore, multiple users resulted in inconsistent formats between projects."

The staff began looking for a software solution to improve information flow and reporting quality.

"We felt a general need to integrate several of the construction documentation and record keeping functions into one computer program to make those functions more efficient and less time consuming," said Harold Mulherin, construction manager.

Info Tech, Inc., a software development company based in Gainesville, Fla., had just the software tool Clark County needed. FieldManager®, a construction contract management system jointly developed by Info Tech and the Michigan Department of Transportation, was a perfect match for their needs.

FieldManager contains data on all aspects of the contract including complete day-to-day details of progress on the work site, benchmarks for the contract, and payment history. Using this information, the FieldManager user can quickly produce over 60 standard reports, respond to ad hoc inquiries, and effortlessly generate contractor pay estimates. In addition, FieldManager users have instant access to the percent complete for each contract item, as well as easy tracking and documentation of contract modifications and materials certifications.





Outdated, paper-based systems replaced in Clark County, Washington

The decision to implement FieldManager meant immediate benefits. "We switched up to what we saw as an electronically integrated system with potential for man-hour savings and better information flow," said Bart Arthur, construction manager.

As with any new implementation, the staff in Clark County took some time getting used to the application. "There was a moderate level of apprehension as there frequently is with any system that requires personnel to develop new skills," Mulherin said. "The apprehension dissipated rapidly as soon as the users realized how useful the program is and as their familiarity with it increased."

Even the department leadership faced a learning curve, but was able to conquer it quickly. "As a 'less than computer savvy' program manager, I was leery of my ability to access information that would be useful to me," Gray said. "However, I have found the interface to be very simple and I am able to access pertinent data and present it in a usable manner."

The staff is experiencing many benefits, including simple estimation, instant data retrieval, clear inspector's daily reports, easy progress estimate payments, and an overall improvement in the professionalism and accuracy of documents. The increase in efficiency is evident.

"We are very confident that our project engineers and inspectors are spending much less time calculating pay items, for instance, and can spend more time inspecting and coordinating the work," Gray said.

Gray goes on to say that the implementation of FieldManager has had positive implications throughout the department and with business partners.

"This product has greatly enhanced the professionalism and consistency of our contract administration at the county. The easy access to information has improved communication among our staff, as well as enhancing our credibility with contractors," he said. "As a program manager, the ability to determine project status and budget information at the click of a mouse is extremely beneficial."

Clark County is now considering the next step into a web-based system by implementing Appia. The staff is particularly interested in Appia's ability to integrate electronic records and applications from advertisement through close-out.



Gray also believes that Appia will help increase communication and collaboration between the agency and its business partners by providing access to the same information, thus limiting

disputes and making processes transparent to the public and business partners. He feels strongly that selecting the right software vendor is vital.

"The success or failure of any information management system will be determined more by the responsiveness and willingness to meet the customer's needs on the part of the vendor, more than the capabilities of the program itself," he says. His team noted that Info Tech has been "very helpful" and that the implementation and user training for FieldManager went smoothly.

Just as Captain William Clark was a pioneer and explorer of what is now the state of Washington, the public works staff of Clark County is pioneering electronic and web-based solutions for managing the growth of their highway construction management program. The technology from Info Tech is making it possible. •



5700 SW 34th Street, Suite 1235, Gainesville, FL 32608
phone: (352) 381-4400 • fax: (352) 381-4444 • www.infotechfl.com

Appia and the Appia logo are registered trademarks of Info Tech, Inc.