

Cook County, Illinois

The Organization: *Serving a Diverse Mission*

Home of the city of Chicago, Cook County, Illinois, is the second largest county in the United States. With 27,000 employees and an annual budget of \$2.6 billion, the county government serves a population of 5 million people.

Cook County has three principal missions to serve: public safety, health care, and highway department operations. Approximately 50% of the budget is allocated to the public safety program — in addition to the sheriff/police department, Cook County runs the largest unified court system and single-site jail facility in the country. The health care system consists of three major hospitals and over 25 ambulatory clinics, and consumes 40% of the annual budget. The highway department maintains roads throughout northeastern Illinois.

The Opportunity:

Automate Diverse Manual Financial Systems

Processes and technology in Cook County offices were a costly and redundant amalgam of procedures, forms, and legacy systems that had worked well at one time or at one location. This patchwork approach resulted in three payroll systems, several finance systems, and different procurement/inventory systems in various departments. Information entered in multiple PC-based applications had to be re-entered into another system. Multi-part forms were filled out by hand to order anything — even basic office supplies. The information then was keyed into the main system so a purchase order could be generated.

Tom Glaser, Cook County's CFO, notes, "We found that the county was very manual and paper intensive in terms of the processes and procedures. Our goal was to automate as many of those as possible. We wanted to be able to input information once, and to be able to share that information throughout the organization."

The J.D. Edwards Solution:

A Robust, Integrated, User-friendly System

Accounting and procurement in government require different approaches than in the private sector. For example, procurement involves a highly competitive bid process and requires audit trails. Payroll in Cook County is also very complex — the county deals with over 75 unions with their own rules and requirements.

Agility and flexibility made J.D. Edwards OneWorld® the hands-down choice. The foundation piece is an accounting solution that addresses the specific requirements of government accounting, and integrates with J.D. Edwards' online procurement. The integrated solution is scalable so current plans to have 300 concurrent users, allowing 1,000 end users, can be expanded to accommodate many more users.

"The process that the county used was to actually have the end users tell us which system they liked best. That came back as J.D. Edwards. And then we looked at that versus cost and, again, J.D. Edwards turned out to be the best choice," says Glaser.

Mike Madden, the senior IT director with the Government Finance Officers' Association (GFOA) working with Cook County in the capacity of project manager, adds, "I guess at the highest level, Cook County and J.D. Edwards matched on a cultural perspective. It seemed to be the right choice from a relationship perspective."

The Results:

Increased Productivity and Reduced Costs

Cook County has realized immediate benefits from implementing the integrated J.D. Edwards system. Ninety percent of manual journal entries have been eliminated, and payroll has been integrated from three systems into one. For the first time in their history, Cook County managers have access to real-time information, which they can use to easily generate timely, relevant management reports.

Cook County is applying J.D. Edwards' online procurement solution across the board for every purchase, such as syringes at Cook County Hospital, equipment for law enforcement, or desks for the treasurer. "There won't be a transaction or purchase made here at

Cook County that won't go through the new system. When you look at it from that perspective, the magnitude is just overwhelming that for the second largest county in the nation, every purchase will be relying on the new J.D. Edwards system," says Madden.

The Future:
Government for the 21st Century

J.D. Edwards solutions have given Cook County the freedom to choose the best ideas, resulting in maximum value for the county and the taxpayers it serves. "Long term, we want to be able to make the government more user friendly to the taxpayers. By offering better ease of access to information from county employees, that will translate into better customer service to the taxpayers," says Glaser.

The ability to share information gives everyone at Cook County the opportunity to get more out of their budgets, saving taxpayer dollars. Up-to-date technology will not only give the county the ability to attract and retain more highly skilled employees, but also will give those employees the tools to provide an unprecedented level of customer service.

According to Madden, "What we've done is set the foundation so that Cook County can keep pace with what's coming down the road: business-to-business and e-commerce opportunities; vendor self-service; employee self-service through the Internet. You need to set the foundation. The foundation is set with J.D. Edwards."