

# State of Oklahoma

2009 NASCIO Recognition Awards Nomination

## Information Technology and Telecommunications Application

Office of State Finance

Nominating Category:  
IT Project and Portfolio  
Management

*Lead, Support, Serve*



## **B. Executive Summary**

The State of Oklahoma Office of State Finance (OSF) successfully implemented a statewide application for entering annual planned expenditures of Information Technology and Telecommunications products, salaries and services in May 2007. The application is browser based and utilizes a fixed template to produce one year operating plans. Legislation requires agencies of the State of Oklahoma to submit this data on an annual basis. This application allows each agency to enter their planned annual spend as required by statute. Availability is 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Office of State Finance has been tasked with gathering and analyzing this data and preparing an annual report to the Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate. Furthermore, the Office of State Finance is responsible for encouraging joint projects and common systems by developing statewide plans and ensuring that acquisitions and new development are consistent with the statewide objectives. OSF must ensure that developments or acquisitions are consistent with the statewide objectives and that the proposed systems are justified and cost effective. This application, as developed, provides a snapshot of the planned expenditures, which allows for proactive planning of statewide needs pertaining to Information Technology and Telecommunications products and services.

Once the planned spend is entered by each agency, the Office of State Finance must review all Telecommunications expenditures and all Information Technology purchases in excess of \$25,000.00 prior to purchasing. The newly developed application allows OSF to log in to the secure site to confirm expenditures were planned and entered sufficiently during each review. New projects are entered within predefined categories with subgroups, while operating budgets are entered as a whole.

The application has surpassed our expectations in that we have: improved our collection of data by more than 30%, virtually eliminated paper submittal processes, reduced staff time, consolidated and centralized operations, and improved cost control. The application fully supports Public Policy Goals, addresses accessibility concerns, has resulted in cross training of staff and has facilitated communication between the Office of State Finance and other state agencies. The payback was less than one month.

## **C. Description of the Business Problem and Solution**

### Problem Statement

The State of Oklahoma Office of State Finance (OSF) has the responsibility of collecting annual Information Technology and Telecommunications planned spend from all state agencies. This data is due July 1 of each year for the coming fiscal year (July 1 through June 30). OSF was collecting this data utilizing manual paper submittal methods (fax and email). Each agency filed a hard copy of their plan and faxed in revisions throughout the year as needed. The volume of paper was enormous and the strain on staff, both at the Office of State Finance and the individual agencies, was taxing.

Once all the data was collected, the Office of State Finance had no easy way to summarize the overall planned expenditures at a statewide level. Therefore, strategic planning and reporting was very difficult, and meeting the requirements of the statutes was challenging. Agencies were unhappy with the manual process and many did not comply with the program requirements.

### Barriers and Challenges

In 2006, new legislation was passed that required each state agency to submit an annual plan rather than a three-year plan. Agencies' staff members were discouraged that beginning July 1, 2007, they would be required to submit an annual plan rather than a three-year plan. With this change the need for an electronic system of filing and modifying plans became even more urgent or compliance would surely fail. Agencies began to view the entire process as being too constrictive and requiring too many staff resources to ensure compliance.

### Assessment and Decision Making Process

As a result of the revised legislation (1 year versus 3 year plan) and the need to streamline the process, management team members met to discuss possible solutions. OSF then consulted with OK.gov and the application was developed. In February of 2007, OSF notified agency IT staff that the application was being developed, it would be accessible by May and training information would follow. Two training sessions were provided to agency staff and emails continued to follow with necessary communication. Other relevant management, technical and procurement staffs were consulted before and during design and development of the application. The browser based application was selected as the solution because it provided an immediate fix to the biggest issues: ease of use, elimination of paper, utilization of technology and 24-hour access.

### Solution

A browser based application with 24-hour access for plan completion, which would allow for self-service, has immediate live modifications throughout the year. Agencies

can sign in using a secure log in, enter their data and notify the Helpdesk when completed. OSF can run reports to summarize data and complete the state's report for submittal to the Governor and legislature. Necessary revisions can be completed throughout the year without faxing in paperwork to modify plans. The application includes a drop down box so agencies can indicate accessibility compliance. A user's guide was developed for quick reference within the application. When a user needs clarification or has questions regarding use of the application, they file a Helpdesk case and a procurement team member with OSF responds directly to the issue. OSF staff can go live with the user to identify the issue or problem for quick resolution.

The State of Oklahoma was responsible for the initial design and continues to be responsible for the development and management of the application. The application was developed and a test site was created to test all application features prior to going live. The State did most of the testing and troubleshooting was provided by OK.gov. OSF continues to communicate application changes via email, and each May reminders are sent out to agency staff regarding the due date (7/1). This communication has resulted in not only acceptance and compliance on the user's part, but an appreciation for simplifying the process (see user quotes below).

### Innovative Characteristics

While the concept of a browser based application is not a new concept, we are not aware of any other state that has developed a similar application for such use.

### **D. Significance of the Project**

The new application allowed the State of Oklahoma to comply with state mandates regarding Information Technology and Telecommunications Plans and Strategic Planning (reporting). The Office of State Finance was tasked with collecting the information and reporting on the findings, along with implementing standard practices. Without a streamlined process the requirements could not be accommodated.

In addition, state agencies are required to indicate accessibility compliance so the application was developed with a built-in feature (drop down box) for indicating projects are in compliance. (Note: The application was developed to meet or exceed the State's Electronic Information Technology Accessibility standards, which are based on the Federal Section 508 Standards for Electronic Information Technology. This guarantees that all user's regardless of impairment can access the application).

The beneficiaries groups for this project are:

- Oklahoma Taxpayers (reduction in costs and resources).
- All State Agencies – easier to use, less resources to complete and reduction in paper costs.
- State Vendors – The State’s report provides a snapshot of anticipated expenditures, thereby providing vendors with information they may utilize for planning their marketing intelligence.
- The Governor and Legislature – Reporting feature allows for a clear view of the State’s planned expenditures.
- State Decision Makers – Information Technology and Telecommunications needs for the coming year, strategic planning.

## **E. Benefit of the Project**

### Summary

Prior to implementation of the application, many agencies were noncompliant in terms of reporting requirements. Complaints about the process were common, paper was wasted, unnecessary resources were expended, accessibility requirements were not addressed and state mandated reporting was limited. The new application provided a mechanism for improving accuracy, data integrity, resource allocation and speed of completion; all within a secure site.

The project supports the State CIO priorities in the following ways:

- 1) Consolidation, centralized data - one system.
- 2) Budget and Cost Control – Agencies are better able to view their budgets and accountability is inherent to the application. The program has reduced costs by minimizing resources and paper costs.
- 3) Security – Secure sign in.
- 4) Electronic Records Management – Hard copies are no longer necessary. Information is stored in the browser based application.
- 5) Transparency and Transformation in Government – Promoting the identification of best practices and accountability using technology to resolve reporting needs. The publication of the State’s Annual Information Technology and Telecommunications Plan is now a simple process. The report is posted on the Oklahoma Office of State Finance’s web site for public review.

Below are a few quotes from agency personnel (users of the application):

“The new electronic application simplifies the process by reducing time spent modifying planned spend and eliminating manual paper processes”. - - *Cassie Gilman, Special Assistant, Office of the Secretary of Energy*

“The new system streamlines processing while promoting accountability, secure access, and spending control”. - - *Connie Hill, IT Secretary, Oklahoma Tax Commission*

“The new system has significantly improved reporting accuracy and reduced the time for entering plan data from 2 weeks to 2 days” - - *Richard Clark, Operations and Applications Manager, Office of State Finance*

“The IT/Telecom reporting application is a useful tool that makes it easier for us to report and OSF to track our IT expenses. It is preferable to the prior process as there really was no way to summarize expenses by category. Also, the IT/telecom application has features which make it easy to distribute reporting information in summary form to others in the Agency who need to use the information for their procurement activities”. - - *Jon Trushenski, Data Services Division, OKDHS*

#### Financial Return on Investment

To date, the Office of State Finance has invested \$10,220.00 in the development and launching of the application. Based on resource reduction (hours) estimates provided by agencies for processing times, OSF calculates approximately \$174,000.00 in savings annually as a result of implementing this application. The application has been operational for two fiscal years which calculates a savings of \$337,780.00 (\$174,000x2)-\$10,220). This does not include the 600-hour reduction in time for OSF staff members to prepare the annual report to the Governor and Legislature, to process plan changes and submittals during the year from the paper process, or the reduction in paper costs by all state agencies (electronic submittal with new system).

#### Non-Financial Return on Investment

The accuracy of reporting has greatly improved by eliminating the margin of error associated with paper processes. Since the implementation of the application the State has been better able to monitor planned spend (on line live application) which has also resulted in greater accountability by state agencies.

State agencies are now in compliance with accessibility requirements (accessibility compliance box within the application).

Prior to fiscal year 2007 approximately one-third of all agencies did not report their plans according to state statutes. In fiscal year 2009 all but one agency reported their plan

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using the on line application. In addition, improved compliance now represents an accurate reflection of planned spend which allows for strategic planning of Information Technology and Telecommunications spend on a state-wide level.

By utilizing the Helpdesk, OSF has improved customer service to users by recording and quickly communicating trouble shooting needs (reduced completion/resolution time). Communication between the agencies has improved as well as it is easy to communicate about something both parties can view live.

As a result of implementing the Information Technology and Telecommunications Application, OSF procurement staff has crossed trained. Prior to its inception only a few people were involved in the tedious process of collecting and maintaining paper copies of the annual plans and routine modifications.

In summary, accuracy of data, monitoring spend and accountability, improved statutory compliance, meeting mandated data collection requirements, accessibility concerns, improved customer service and communications, as well as cross training opportunities have all been achieved through implementation of this browser based application.