

Incommunities

Budgeting and Forecasting System



Incommunities' budgeting and forecasting system involved hundreds of large, complex spreadsheets; its skilled finance team was tied up with information processing when what it really wanted to be doing was providing advice. What was needed was a streamlined system that would cut out manual processing and offer insight into income and costs. Blueprint won the contract to design and build a SAP Business Planning and Consolidation system that would meet the brief.

Incommunities is the largest housing association in the Bradford district, providing around 21,300 affordable, high quality homes in desirable neighbourhoods. Created in 2003, it was formerly known as Bradford Community Housing Trust.

Following an organisational review in 2006, the finance team launched a programme to improve its services. Financial Controller Nickie Hallard wanted to streamline her department's processes and develop a system that would offer real insight into income and costs. Her aim was to transform the department from a processor of information to an advisory partner. She wanted the finance team to be equipped to offer advice, guidance and support, taking an active role in the organisation's performance improvement programme.

At the time, Incommunities relied on a largely manual, Excel-based budgeting and forecasting process. Budgeting was time-consuming, with manual tracking and audit trails and limited analytical capabilities. The consolidation process took place manually. The reporting functions of the core general ledger system were inflexible: manual intervention was required to create genuinely useful reports. As a result, budget-holders felt detached from the budgeting process, which was seen as the domain of the finance department.

Incommunities evaluated a number of budgeting and forecasting applications. They had worked with Blueprint on previous projects, and invited us to tender on the strength of our expertise in developing both business intelligence and budgeting & forecasting systems.

Would you like to know more?

Contact Blueprint on 0207 832 1800 or email info@bpms.co.uk
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Core Technology

- SAP Business Planning & Consolidation



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Budgeting and Forecasting System

Blueprint won the contract to design and build the system that would facilitate budgeting, forecasting, capital bids, salary and expenses planning.

The system would provide:

- a secure and centralised source for financial and HR cost information to improve consistency and accuracy;
- a secure, user-friendly, standardised process for input and collection of planning and forecast data;
- a structured business workflow and approval model that would make budget-holders more responsible and accountable for costs and income;
- an easier method of creating reports, which would allow the finance department to devote more of its time and resources to data-analysis and business decision-making.

We reviewed the department's existing processes, which involved hundreds of large, complex Excel spreadsheets. Using SAP BPC's functionality, we developed a more manageable and efficient system that imports data automatically from Cedar Open Accounts and Northgate HR & Payroll. This allows planning and monitoring to take place using 'actuals' data and HR and payroll data, enables trends to be analysed, and permits year-on-year expenditure comparisons to be made.

The system's benefits include:

Automated reporting

The system is flexible, allowing the finance team to customise reporting and analysis functions as required. It also includes a standardised suite of monthly consolidated budgeting and forecasting reports.

A secure, central data-source

It captures and stores information in a single central location, ensuring that everyone works from the same accurate data set. This is particularly important when performing complex 'what-if' and scenario analyses that model, measure and assess outcomes.

A secure, user-friendly, standardised process

The standardised model improves consistency and accuracy, and makes budget-holders more responsible and accountable for costs and income. The main interface is Microsoft Excel, which acts as a window to the central data-source. The finance team controls the templates, which are locked to minimise errors and prevent users from making unauthorised changes.

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"Blueprint has successfully delivered a system to streamline the process and improve its robustness; as well as facilitate the cultural change required to move to greater business ownership of the budget. Whilst the transformation process is still ongoing, six months after implementation the benefits are clear, with the latest forecasting round being completed within a couple of weeks. Feedback from the Finance team and the business is positive and the potential to extend the use of the application into new areas is apparent."

Nickie Hallard, Financial Controller at Incommunities

Our business partners



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