



CITY OF PORTLAND INNOVATION PROJECT

PROJECT STATUS REPORT

Fiscal Year Funding Provided: 2013-2014
Reporting Period: Project Start through 12/1/2014

Innovation Project Title:	XML Data Sharing Pilot Program
Lead Bureau:	Portland Housing Bureau
Key Partners & Collaborators:	Impact Northwest, Cascade Property Management, Affinity Property Management, Income Property Management
Project Sponsor(s):	Leslie Goodlow, Traci Manning
Project Lead(s):	Antoinette Pietka

Project Finances:

Include budget allocated from Innovation Fund and the amount spent to date.

<i>Allocated:</i>	\$48,000
<i>Expenditures-to-date:</i>	\$40,000

Project Summary:

Include the latest project news, updates to timelines, milestones reached, results achieved so far, and post-implementation requirements.

The goal of this project was to develop and pilot an XML data sharing program that permitted Bureau partners to export data from their own internal information management systems and upload data into PHB databases. The intent of the project was to greatly reduce the data entry burden of PHB partnering agencies while improving the quality and amount of data received by PHB, and ultimately providing better program performance information to guide decision-making.

The project focused on two groups of PHB partners. Property management companies that manage PHB regulated housing are required to regularly report extensive income and demographic information on the residents of affordable housing. Before the implementation of the XML data sharing pilot program, these agencies were reporting information to PHB in one source format (a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet) as well as hand-entering tenant data into a PHB web-based database. The pilot program created an XML tool to map the Excel spreadsheet data into a prescribed XML schema. PHB and agency users are now able to automatically upload the mapped data into PHB's web-based database using the vendor's XML upload tool. This phase of the pilot

project is complete and has eliminated hundreds of hours of duplicate data entry by the many property management companies that currently report to PHB.

Non-profit organizations that provide homeless services are the second group of partnering agencies targeted by the XML data sharing pilot program. This phase of the data pilot project is currently underway and nearing completion. PHB has partnered with Impact Northwest, a non-profit organization providing housing and homeless services in Multnomah County. PHB is working with a programmer to map Impact Northwest's source data to a prescribed XML schema and then upload data at agreed upon intervals using the vendor XML upload tool. It is expected that this tool will eliminate the need for long hours of staff training as well as relieve the data entry burden currently placed on Impact Northwest. This phase of the XML data sharing project is also scalable and the process developed with Impact Northwest can be used to deploy XML data sharing with other PHB non-profit partners.

Successes & Lessons Learned:

Share your successes and lessons learned so far on the project, and successes and lessons learned about innovation in the City organization.

In large part, this innovation project has been successful because we started small — one data source at a time — and developed processes and tools that we could quickly scale up and use with multiple agencies. Starting small allowed us to learn from our mistakes early on, and gave us time to learn and adjust the project to achieve our goals.

While XML is a great boon to public and private agencies needing to share data across software environments, we have learned that it is not without its challenges. We have found that someone — PHB staff, or other standard-setter — must reconcile the differences between data sources and the destination web-based databases in order for data to be shared. Data reconciliation needs to overcome possible technical challenges as well as differences in semantics. In the two pilot groups we discovered many opportunities for agencies to use different formats and terms to describe the same attributes. Staff have worked as integrators to determine if it is possible to use a particular attribute for a particular purpose.

These challenges, while serious, have not been great enough to outweigh the benefits of implementing XML data sharing. We have been astounded at the efficiencies gained through the XML upload tool. Hundreds of hours of duplicate data entry have been eliminated. For the bureau, an unexpected benefit of the pilot program is that more efficient data collection tools free up staff time and capacity for data analysis and reporting.

Next Steps:

Describe key next steps and milestones for the remainder of the current fiscal year, 2014-2015.

The next steps for the remainder of the fiscal year are to complete the data mapping and testing process with Impact Northwest, formalize their data upload process, and evaluate the data sharing pilot project's overall performance and potential for scalability. We anticipate that our work with Impact Northwest will be complete in the spring of 2015. After completion of this final phase of the project the bureau will evaluate the pilot project against its original proposed outcome of improving data quality and completeness by a minimum of 25% for each participating agency.

Comments:

Include any additional comments you would like to share about the project.

The bureau has greatly appreciated the opportunity to participate in the Mayor's Innovation Fund. The pilot has been extremely successful and has permitted partners to easily upload data into PHB systems while eliminating hours of cumbersome data entry. The bureau has submitted a second innovation project proposal that is intended to build on the successes of this project. The proposed project, "Data Sharing with Faith-Based Nonprofits to End Homelessness", will couple the specialized care and commitment provided by faith-based organizations serving the homeless with City services and housing resources.