

King County Housing Authority

Unit4 Business World delivers improved accountability, adaptability and independence to help the housing authority fulfill its mandate and reduce the costs of constant change by \$225K annually.

Founded in 1939, King County Housing Authority (KCHA) provides rental housing assistance and a broad array of supportive services to more than 18,000 families living in an area encompassing 33 cities in more than 2,000 square miles of Washington State. It is a beautiful area, but an expensive place to live; with a median home value of over \$400K, access to housing can be a challenge for low-and even moderate-income people.

From the first small homes built in 1942 to house coal miners, to the latest after-school facility that opened in 2012, KCHA plays an important role in providing affordable housing and services to those in need. KCHA is committed to encouraging self-sufficiency and protecting the dignity of people with limited resources while safeguarding the public trust. A regular recipient of innovation awards from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) and state government, KCHA is recognized as a leader in the field of affordable housing.

The situation

Between owning over 9,000 housing units and managing over 11,000 Housing Choice Vouchers, KCHA provides safe, reliable housing to more than 20,000 low- and moderate-income families, elderly people and people with disabilities. Their annual consolidated budget is about \$221.5 million and it employs over 360 full-time employees.

The organization's workforce is aging while demand for its wide scope of programming and housing offerings is not slowing down. This made for risky knowledge management because much of the

organizational expertise was stored only in the heads of long time employees or on disparate excel spreadsheets stored on hard drives. Succession planning was almost non-existent. As a housing authority, KCHA also deals with frequent asset acquisition; reports and documentation are constantly coming in and need to be stored securely.

The needs

KCHA's information management was inefficient and disorganized. With disconnected departments and business functions, much data collection and storage was duplicated because different departments couldn't access the information in others. Complete information was hard to track down and put together. As a result, expensive property-related legal documents often had to be redone at great cost and loss of time if the originals couldn't be found.





KCHA realized they had a great opportunity to improve their provision of services through better grant and information management, and Unit4 was there to help them do just that.

The solution

A Happy Unit4 Business World Customer – KCHA has been a Unit4 Business World client since 2010, when they switched from a system that wasn't working for them. KCHA chose Business World for its design that enables users to modify the system quickly and easily to meet changing needs, without business disruption. Within a year of switching to Business World, KCHA realized savings of over \$225K annually and improved their overall accountability with accurate budgeting, simply by enabling property managers and front-line staff to access the information they needed.

Invoices received from vendors were scanned, allowing property managers to view them and drill down on monthly budget-vs-actual financial reports, eliminating the need to go back and forth between field offices and the accounting department. The two members of the financial reporting team at KCHA, now freed up from fielding calls about invoicing, are able to take on more grant work and have more time for financial reporting. Sensible business decisions (like changes made to KCHA's property ownership and management structures and reporting needs), sometimes hindered by rigid ERP systems, could easily be made to match business needs. Authorized users were able to quickly and easily make changes, and demonstrate accountability and success.

As a public sector organization, KCHA is familiar with frequent changes to government reporting requirements; changes to reporting structures, which

“ We are very busy around here; things are constantly changing and we are continually making changes in Business World. But that's exactly why we bought it.”

Craig Violante,
Chief Financial Officer, King County Housing Authority

cost them up to \$10K per year when requesting expensive customizations from their previous vendor, were quickly implemented by KCHA end users in Business World. Budget coding errors that used to result in an inability to match budget-to-actual were overcome by Violante's creation of a tool within Business World that allowed staff to find and use the correct account codes, reducing time needed for the manual resolution of errors.

Unit4 Business World Enables Customer-driven Innovation – When KCHA began to take steps to address organizational challenges including departmental silos, disparate data management and succession planning, Craig Violante, Chief Financial Officer at KCHA, was confident relying on Business World's flexibility and integration to meet their changing needs again.

In 2014 Violante went, once again, into innovation mode to take advantage of Unit4's elastic-foundation People Platform, which provides the ability to modify Business World systems through Flexi-Fields and database attributes. The goal was to identify all the disconnected data in the organization and decide the best way to aggregate it. With extended functionality and new database fields, *implemented*

UNIT4

100% internally within about 30 days, KCHA now has an integrated information management system that unifies the available data, harmonizing projects, departments and service delivery.

Business World became the platform on which all the scattered data is unified and provides easy, one-stop shopping, with easy document uploading and cross-referencing. KCHA now enjoys improved efficiency and service delivery because everyone has access to the same information and overall picture. For example, a project that requires gathering property titles and legal documents used to take several days to amalgamate. Using Business World, projects like these can take as little as an hour.

The information management system that KCHA built in Business World significantly reduces organizational silos and duplicated efforts, as anyone can now cross-reference linked documents and data. For example, all of a property's pertinent documents are listed in one place and are linked to the County tax assessor's website, zoning and financial reports on the property. With many long-time employees nearing retirement, this system has given KCHA the confidence to move into the future and train incoming employees on an intuitive, easy-to-use system to deliver high-quality services without getting hung up on complicated customizations.



Summary

Violante estimates that just in the first five months of 2015, KCHA has saved at least 2 weeks of research time that would have had to be spent on information gathering that now takes a matter of minutes. From the very tangible benefits of reducing annual costs by over \$225K, realized in less than a year, to the strategic benefits of improved accountability, adaptability and independence, Business World makes it easier for KCHA to fulfill its mandate.

About Unit4

Unit4 is a leading provider of enterprise applications empowering people in service organizations. With annual revenue north of 500M Euro and more than 4000 employees world-wide, Unit4 delivers ERP, industry-focused and best-in-class applications. Thousands of organizations from sectors including professional services, education, public services, not-for-profit, real estate, wholesale, and financial services benefit from Unit4 solutions. Unit4 is in business for people.

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