



EKI Designed and Implemented the First Successful Multi-User Online Documentation System for the City of Chicago's Procurement Services

CLIENT

The City of Chicago's Department of Procurement Services (DPS) is the main contracting body for Chicago. It handles 70% of the City's contracts and 60 employees. Though the project was driven by the Mayor's office, it was jointly handled by the DPS and the Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT).

CHALLENGE

In 2006, the City required vendors to submit paper Economic Disclosure Statements (EDS) in order to be considered for City contracts. The EDS documents were then processed and systematically stored in traditional filing cabinets. Although this system had worked for decades, it created a litany of inefficiencies and inaccuracies: Vendors had to reproduce a new EDS every time they applied for City contracts, a time-consuming and often complicated process. Meanwhile, the application format did little to ensure that applicants were providing the right information.

Moreover, the system was prone to process delays. For example, because review of the submitted EDS was the last step, any errors by the applicant would incur additional time to reconcile. Additionally, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests from the press often overwhelmed the staff who had to physically locate each paper EDS.

As the DPS pursued a more efficient, intelligent and innovative technology approach, they were also faced with the challenge of complex requirements and continual changes in administration and priorities.

EKI SOLUTION

On the second attempt to create an online system, Electronic Knowledge Interchange (EKI) was asked to assume the project based on its long history of working with the City and its exceptional level of technical knowledge and experience. Specifically, EKI understood the technology blueprint of the City and its different environments, EKI is proficient in the City's Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) and could leverage its expertise from an IT architectural point of view.

EKI subsequently oversaw the business requirements, functional and technical design, development, testing, deployment and ongoing support and training for the new Online EDS system, which effectively:

- ▶ Reduced the time required to award contracts
- ▶ Standardized business processes across departments
- ▶ Increased transparency of the firms doing business with the City
- ▶ Made all EDS information searchable by City employees, vendors, the press and the public

- ▶ Enabled data-mining for investigative and law-enforcement purposes
- ▶ Integrated into other City systems and services
- ▶ Built in flexibility to minimize the long-term support costs incurred by City ordinance changes
- ▶ Created a progressive, interactive application-format that enhanced accuracy by using multiple choice questions and a system of checking answers against previous ones
- ▶ Made it extendable to other City departments and various document management needs

RESULTS

The Online EDS system has been a cornerstone of the DPS' automation strategy, dramatically improving turnaround time and cost-effectiveness, delivering the following:

- ▶ A significant reduction in staff time to review EDS
- ▶ Improved accuracy in reviewing EDS
- ▶ Tens of thousands of dollars saved in scanning costs
- ▶ Approximately 10 days per contract saved in contract-processing time
- ▶ An initial capture of EDS information that ensures a complete and vastly more accurate EDS
- ▶ A system easily maintained by non-technical business owner
- ▶ A reduction in redundant uses of the City's technical and infrastructure resources
- ▶ The Online EDS is leveraged Citywide including delegate agencies
- ▶ A model for online document management needs

What's more, the new Online EDS system has made a tremendous difference for the vendor community as well as the press, both of whom have benefitted from the convenience and effectiveness of submitting and retrieving EDS information online. As one vendor put it, "We are thrilled to be able to work within a paperless system. The benefits have been invaluable and immediate."

With EKI's assistance, the City of Chicago Department of Procurement Services also advanced its goal of transparency by making the system publicly available for citizens to conduct independent research or find contract information. "Automating and streamlining the EDS process has brought a multitude of hard- and soft-cost savings," said the Deputy CIO of the DoIT. "The alleviation in staff burden and obstacles to timeliness, efficacy and compliance has been monumental."

EKI delivered efficiency, accuracy, transparency and usability to the online documentation system that the City of Chicago's Department of Procurement Services used to award contracts.