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IT Governance: Making the Difference in Cities, Counties and States

Project and portfolio management helps government respond to old and new challenges.

PPM a Hot Topic

California Department of Food and Agriculture sets PPM standard for other agencies.



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—Chris Cruz, CIO, California Department of Food and Agriculture

You know you are doing something right when several agencies are calling you for advice. Since the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) adopted a project and portfolio management (PPM) strategy, it has been asked by several other California agencies for information regarding PPM. “We’re getting a lot of inquiries,” said Chris Cruz, CIO of the CDFA.

With the sponsorship and support of CDFA’s Agency Information Officer (AIO) Davood Ghods, Cruz and the project team — consisting of Katie Fears, CDFA’s IT coordinator, and an external consultant — worked closely with CA to configure and implement CA Clarity™ PPM. The CDFA started using CA Clarity™ PPM in October 2007 and since then, the department has quickly become a trendsetter for PPM within the state.

The CDFA works to ensure safe food products for California citizens. It also protects against pests and diseases, promotes best agriculture practices and supports the state’s huge agricultural industry. To manage projects within the department, the CDFA took a PPM approach.

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Currently the CA Clarity™ PPM tool helps manage the department’s portfolio of IT projects and enables detailed management of each project on a day-to-day basis. “PPM provides the CDFA with a repository that is required to manage all of our projects in a data documentation process,” said Cruz. “This repository

provides the ability to update the CDFA AIO and executives with a single point of contact and authorization that they need to assess all of our projects from an executive, or portfolio, view.”

Improvement Through Integration

The CDFA’s IT governance process is the foundation upon which CA Clarity™ PPM is configured and is essential to applying this process to all projects. “It’s our project portfolio — one-stop shopping, if you will — for how we manage and implement projects here at CDFA,” Cruz said. “It’s our system of record.”

New initiatives at the CDFA dictated the need to transition to a more powerful tool for applications and processes that were both repeatable and sustainable. With CA Clarity™ PPM now in place, the department has realized an increase in efficiencies in all those areas.

CA Clarity™ PPM has brought numerous efficiencies. “It helps CDFA monitor projects to ensure they are managed within budget, scope and schedule,” said Cruz. “Those are the things that concern me, and the tool gives other managers and me the capability to really forecast. It gives an idea whether there are potential pitfalls so we can evaluate those before they actually happen.”

Cruz said executives want to avoid issues within the projects they oversee. They want projects to succeed, and they want to know about risks in advance. “This tool allows us to make projections on projects or see risks that may be coming so you mitigate those appropriately,” he said.



“This tool will serve us as a cost-containment strategy, to help us manage and mitigate risk, and save costs wherever applicable.”

— Chris Cruz, CIO, California Department of Food and Agriculture

CA Clarity™ PPM also helps the CDFA align its IT work more closely with the department’s mission, goals and business objectives. “That’s how the tool is configured, from a portfolio perspective,” Cruz said. “The goals and objectives of our organization are aligned with our IT projects. That’s a big deal.” Each project has a business objective assigned to it within the system, and that business objective is closely aligned with the CDFA’s mission and goals. That is just one example of how organizations can configure the tool to work toward the organization’s specific needs.

Several Advantages

The CDFA envisions that the PPM will realize future cost efficiencies. “This tool will serve us as a cost-containment strategy, to help us manage and mitigate risk, and save costs wherever applicable,” Cruz noted. Cost containment is one of the chief reasons PPM is becoming more popular. Cruz said that is an important factor because budget cuts are becoming more prevalent.

CA Clarity™ PPM will help the department identify a subpar project before it begins, to avoid unnecessary costs. “We’re hoping to make sure projects that don’t really have a good chance of being successful get weeded out before we even start them,” Cruz said.

CA Clarity™ PPM allows the CDFA to easily report on all of its projects. Project managers and executives can configure their own views and can easily change them when presenting information to others. Security within CA Clarity™ PPM lets the department assign appropriate levels of access rights to data and functionality to the different levels of staff based on their role in the organization and on a project. CA Clarity™ PPM provides the CDFA with a good look at everything — from a high-level

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portfolio view for executives to a detailed, granular view for project managers.

For the CDFA, the tool is a great way to measure project performance. Managers can quickly determine how each project is doing in regard to its budget, scope and schedule. If a project is 10 percent off the mark in a key area, reassessments are done. The CDFA sets thresholds within CA Clarity™ PPM to help managers keep projects on track. Graphic features make it easy to view project progress, cost and resource utilization throughout the life cycle of that project.

Positive Results

The CDFA uses CA Clarity™ PPM to track and report on all project risks. At the start of each project, the project manager performs a high-level risk analysis using CA Clarity™ PPM’s risk-rating tool. This tool has been configured to include CDFA-specific risk criteria and thresholds to calculate the risk score for a project: green — low risk; yellow — moderate risk; red — high risk. The ability to score projects based on overall risk helps CDFA executives and project managers determine the level of monitoring a project requires and provides opportunities for advance planning should changes to scope, schedule or cost be required to complete the project successfully.

The detailed project view lets managers monitor the issues, risks, milestones, tasks, assigned resources, dollars spent and more. It provides all the information a project manager or high-level manager wants to see.

CA Clarity™ PPM improves the health of the entire portfolio. “It’s a very valuable tool to help manage,” said Cruz. “Since we’ve been using this tool and have set up the project management and governance processes here, we’ve been able to keep projects on track toward attaining their desired milestones. I think you’re going to see more and more people going to this.” ♦

Big Moves in the Biggest City

New York City improves management and IT governance with a move to enterprisewide PPM.



“I think we’re going to get very good savings, very good benefit out of this.”

— Paul Cosgrave, New York City CIO and Commissioner of the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications

New York is the largest city in the United States, and the diversity of its residents is immense. While providing services to approximately 20 million residents, workers and visitors daily, New York always faces unique challenges. Meeting those challenges takes an unfaltering attitude.

That attitude is on display daily within one of the City’s key agencies, the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT). The department is rolling out an enterprisewide program centered on project and portfolio management (PPM) and improved IT governance.

For DoITT, moving to PPM is about bringing even better management to a department that’s already successfully implementing projects for the City’s approximately 100 agencies. Those agen-

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cies provide a broad range of services. DoITT, with more than 1,000 employees, is asked to support these agencies in any number of ways.

In its quest to work better and smarter, DoITT selected the CA Clarity™ PPM software tool to help with its IT governance and PPM. Although DoITT is using several CA products, CA Clarity™ PPM is of utmost importance to the agency as it moves forward on project and portfolio management. “This tool is absolutely critical for us to bring more control and discipline

to what we do,” said Paul Cosgrave, New York City CIO and Commissioner of DoITT.

Higher Productivity, Lower Cost

“Discipline is the key to getting things done in an efficient and effective manner,” Cosgrave added. In his experience, process maturity is always a big factor in running IT projects.

Strategically the aim with PPM is to better manage IT projects throughout the City. For DoITT, three drivers fuel this need. These are: 1) making sure projects align with business needs stemming from the strategic priorities set by the Mayor; 2) better ability to manage projects, including risk assessment, risk management and project reporting; and 3) improved management of resources, including making sure resources are assigned to the projects that need them most.

“From a project management perspective, you want to make sure your projects are being well managed and are performing as expected,” said Cosgrave. “We want to do things right and do the right

things. The whole notion of having good control over your projects, and doing your projects the right way, is a key element.”

There’s another very critical aspect as well. “Probably even more important is doing the right thing,” Cosgrave said. “Portfolio management means being sure that you’re focusing on the projects that are going to have the most beneficial impact to the enterprise.” Utilizing CA Clarity™ PPM will help the department set up a quantitative look at its portfolio so better decisions can be made about

which projects should have priority for funding and staffing. "It should really enhance IT governance for the City."

Cosgrave expects PPM to have a big impact on his department's effectiveness and ability to deliver services. Although figures won't be available until later, cost reductions are also expected. "I think we're going to get very good savings, very good benefit out of this," Cosgrave said.

DoITT has hundreds of projects going on at any one time. Cosgrave said if just a few of those projects are better managed, the savings could be substantial.

The Right Choices

Cosgrave believes CA Clarity™ PPM will assist his department in choosing the right projects, manage risks and allocate resources. Better visibility across all projects could help eliminate redundant technologies. There could also be better handoffs of projects between organizations. Cosgrave expects to see around a 10 percent improvement in productivity.

Cordell Schachter is DoITT's Chief Project Officer and Associate Commissioner. He's directing DoITT's



CA Clarity™ PPM implementation and helping other agencies do the same. Schachter said getting project information into CA Clarity™ PPM allows everyone from project managers to executives to access the information they need.

The tool also requires managers to be thorough. "Clarity makes you document your workflow, from the project's idea stage through the decision gate. It also helps determine whether the project offers the proper return on investment to proceed for the level of risk, and the amount of resources that it needs. Finally it enables visibility to each project's implementation, control activities and closure activities," Schachter said.

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From there, reports can be produced, performance trends can be observed and DoITT can gauge whether projects are getting the proper return on investment. "Having the information in a database designed to allow this reporting and analysis really only exists in a PPM tool like Clarity," Schachter observed.

Better Tool, Better Alignment

Project managers are required to enter data into CA Clarity™ PPM every day. That keeps the project information flowing much faster. It also makes it easier to detect and deal with risk. "The way we've configured the tool requires each project manager to state the risks that are known to them," Schachter noted. "Once a risk statement is made, we look for a management plan to deal with that risk should a trigger event occur. And part of that management strategy

is to reduce either the likelihood or the impact of that risk."

DoITT also configured CA Clarity™ PPM so it can easily show executives which projects need extra attention. "We've created a system called the 'Project Health Scorecard,' which provides a quantitative assessment across about a half-dozen categories with factual criteria, using Clarity as the mechanism where information is entered and the assessment is made," said Schachter. "From there, we've created dashboards that allow executives and managers to scan projects and their scores."

The tool also helps keep all projects aligned with the Mayor's "themes," said

Cosgrave. Projects, and sometimes even tasks, are tagged to specific themes and desired outcomes from the Mayor's overall direction for the City. "Making sure we're aligned with the priorities of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayors and agency heads is absolutely critical to what we're doing here," Cosgrave said.

As with many public-sector entities, PPM is the answer for New York City. "It's a way to keep tabs on what's going on across a hundred different agencies in the City, as well as the hundreds of projects that my own organization is taking on at any given time," said Cosgrave. "It's pretty significant, in terms of the number of events we're trying to track here. We have a responsibility to our customers — the City and its taxpayers — to maximize our IT investments, and we look to PPM and Clarity to help us do that." ♦

Meaningful Change Brings Real Results

Project and Portfolio Management helps Oakland County, Mich., move in a better direction.



“Project and portfolio management has changed everything we do.”

—Phil Bertolini, Deputy County Executive and CIO, Oakland County, Mich.

A key part of any meaningful change is the decision to change — making that commitment to arrive at a better place. The leaders of Oakland County, Mich., decided to get IT to a better place. It was a smart decision for this Detroit-area county with more than 1 million residents.

“Project and portfolio management has changed everything we do,” said Phil Bertolini, deputy county executive and county CIO. “It changed our entire ability to satisfy the needs of our customers, while keeping our process very transparent.” This transparency lets the county executive and board of commissioners say yes to new projects with greater confidence.

But circa 1996, there wasn’t much trust in the IT department. That was something Bertolini had seen for himself. As

the county’s administrator of equalization back then, he was an IT customer. Once he took over as CIO in 2001, he knew he needed to continue to change the perception of the department within the county.

Project and portfolio management (PPM) tools from CA helped Bertolini transform things. CA Clarity™ PPM software helps to more effectively manage the 100 or so IT projects the county usually has in progress. Bertolini can view the entire portfolio and keep tasks aligned with the county’s business goals. CA Clarity™ PPM also lets project managers keep things on track, spot risks and issues, generate reports and control costs.

IT is more trusted now, because people can use CA Clarity™ PPM to track how projects are doing. “The only way we could gain that trust is through strong project and portfolio management, as

well as transparency into the process,” said Bertolini.

Less Time, Lower Costs

CA Clarity™ PPM also drills down into the details. The county tracks 202 IT employees and contractors 24/7. This amount of detail helps effectively allocate resources and bill customers. The whole process is now quicker and less expensive.

Historical data in CA Clarity™ PPM lets the county look at past projects and use the information while planning new projects. It also helps to benchmark financials, so the county has less variance when it compares estimates to actual costs. PPM has saved the county significant money in numerous ways.

To date, PPM through CA Clarity™ PPM has been very effective. So effective, in fact, that in order to showcase IT’s importance in the planning process, Bertolini was promoted to deputy county executive. “Now, technology is much more of a strategic initiative, versus a provider,” Bertolini said.

Since CA Clarity™ PPM is a robust, powerful tool, and IT governance is of huge importance, Bertolini and other county leaders believe in the PPM process they’ve adopted. Bertolini would recommend CA Clarity™ PPM for other governments. “The No. 1 piece of advice I would give would be to create a strong project management methodology, and live by it,” he said.

Oakland County has worked with CA for many years now, and the county sees CA as an operational partner, not just a vendor. “We bring in the Clarity folks on a semi-annual basis and have them look at our process to see if we’re headed in the right direction,” Bertolini said. Although the county’s leaders have been moving IT in a better direction for years, they know there are always opportunities to improve further. ❖

CA, one of the world's largest information technology (IT) management software companies, unifies and simplifies the management of enterprise-wide IT for greater business results. Our vision, tools and expertise help customers manage risk, improve service, manage costs and align their IT investments with their business needs.

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