



Peoria, Arizona Standardizes Processes and Simplifies Project Funding Tracking

With Skire Unifier™, the city now finds it easy to manage, track, and report on projects—no matter how complex.

Executive Summary

Organization

Name	City of Peoria, Arizona
Industry	Government
Location	Arizona, USA
Population	142,000

Business Challenges

- Standardize project management processes across five departments
- Improve project data timeliness and reporting
- Improve ability to track projects with multiple funding sources

Solution

Skire Unifier capital planning and capital project management solution

Business Results

- Created common processes and initiated collaboration across five departments
- Provided real-time visibility into project data and status
- Enabled high-level Capital Improvement Program reporting for Budget department and upper management
- Provided flexible tracking for multiple funding sources and complex projects

Quote

"As a custodian of taxpayer money, we seek to work as efficiently and effectively as possible. Skire Unifier is helping us do that."
—Herman Koebergen, materials manager, City of Peoria

Originally founded by families who migrated west from Peoria, Illinois, the City of Peoria, Arizona is now a suburb of Phoenix and Arizona's fourth largest city in terms of incorporated area. Peoria is growing rapidly, as evidenced by a ten-year capital improvement program (CIP) of approximately \$1 billion. Five city departments—public works with responsibility for vertical construction; utilities, which manages water and wastewater treatment; engineering, which maintains roads and streets; community services and parks; and the budget department—oversee the CIP.

Complexity Reigns

Like other municipalities, Peoria frequently must manage CIP projects that involve several departments and multiple funding sources—and accounting for funding and expenses on complex projects quickly became painful. For example, project funding may flow from federal grants, state funds, general obligation bonds, cash, service and fee revenues, charitable gifts, or other grants, and it is not unusual to track up to ten funding sources on a single project. Complex projects, such as roadway improvement project, can involve the city budget, engineering, and utility departments and be sub-divided into smaller projects, each associated with a certain segment of the road and each comprised of phases. Additional work, such as required drainage, might be tracked separately for several of the road segments.

In the past, department project managers tracked project status and funding using a range of ad-hoc systems, including spreadsheets and email. Information resided in numerous formats, so data often had to be manually consolidated for reporting. Contacting busy project managers was time-consuming, and it was difficult to ensure that information was complete, current, and consistent.

"Not only was tracking funding sources and phases painful," said Herman Koebergen, materials manager for the City of Peoria, "it was difficult for upper management to integrate information between the departments and gain a high-level perspective of the entire CIP. We needed the ability to roll everything into one program and gain a high-level view of the entire job."

Expense tracking and payment applications often took weeks to process. Previously, when contractors or architects submitted payment applications, it could take up to 14 days to process the application and enter it into the financial system. Payments could take anywhere from two to six weeks.



Seeking a Comprehensive Solution

The City of Peoria began searching for a comprehensive project management, reporting, and funding tracking solution. The new solution had to greatly simplify reporting, provide real-time visibility into project information, and allow the city to standardize its data and project management processes. In addition, it had to allow project managers to track funding down to the task level and map expenses back to the city's financial system.

After an extensive solicitation process, Peoria chose Skire Unifier™ for its reporting, cost management, and workflow functionality. Unifier is a powerful business process automation platform for managing programs, projects, resources and assets. The platform centralizes comprehensive management capabilities and makes them available to everyone who needs them through a standard Web browser. Unifier was implemented in mid-July, 2007 and the city is moving all of its CIP information into the system.

Facilitating Collaboration

Today, approximately 150 people use Unifier from the city's public works, utilities, engineering, community services, and budget departments. And unlike the past when each department worked on projects individually, today they are working together from a common set of processes.

"Unifier drew us all into the same room and enabled us to begin working as a team rather than as a collection of silo organizations," said Koebergen. "The new system sparks collaboration and has brought individuals together with a lot more information to share."

Gaining Real-time Visibility

Unifier's central repository stores all project information together, so users can quickly and easily find the specific information they need. Expense and budget information is updated immediately when entered, so that everyone always has real-time data for making decisions. For example, when a change order or payment application enters the system, it is immediately reflected on the project cost sheet, so the city always knows where everything stands. The new system has significantly improved timeliness and accuracy of project information for budgeting and executive reporting.

Multiple Fund Sources, Minimal Hassle

With Unifier, the city tracks funding sources down to the task level using work breakdown structures and has greatly simplified cost management with consistent data. From building a wall to pouring concrete, and from a task-level view to high-level CIP summaries, Unifier delivers superior flexibility and efficiency. "As a custodian of taxpayer money, we seek to work as efficiently and effectively as possible," said Koebergen. "Skire Unifier is helping us do that."

From Project to Program

One of the capabilities that the city is increasingly using more is Unifier's program management capability. With Unifier, the city can now link multiple projects together to create a program while retaining deep project visibility, multiple funding source tracking, and collaboration between departments. Managing complex projects enables upper management staff to easily view and manage everything as a cohesive program while having access to underlying data.

Next Steps

The city is moving forward with a pilot project that enables external partners, such as engineering firms, architects, or general contractors, to access project information and submit payment applications through Unifier. The two firms currently involved in the project are extremely enthusiastic about having access to key project information and having information processed on a timely basis.

Plans also call for using the Unifier data to provide Peoria citizens with current project information and timelines. Citizens will eventually be able to check road status and repair timelines, learn about new facilities being planned, and answer many questions that would otherwise be telephoned into city departments. Peoria's goal is to provide timely information about city projects while minimizing the volume of telephone calls that are currently handled by busy city staff members. Peoria's IT Department is also currently evaluating Unifier for managing its portfolio of IT projects.

"We have strong support from the city manager, mayor and council to find innovative solutions that meet today's needs and allow us to take advantage of new opportunities," said Koebergen. "We're working hard to improve our effectiveness, and it's why we're glad that we found Skire Unifier. We have significantly improved our data, information accuracy, and timeliness with Unifier—and it's hard to put a price tag on that."