

Mojave Desert Air Quality Mgmt District

Success Story

For This Government Entity, a New Accounting System Was a Breath of Fresh Air

MOJAVE DESERT AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT (MDAQMD), CALIFORNIA - MDAQMD is one of California's 35 air districts and geographically the second largest, with jurisdiction over the desert portion of San Bernardino County and the northeast portion of Riverside County. Their mission is to attain and maintain a healthful environment for the more than 500,000 residents within its boundaries, while supporting strong and sustainable economic growth.

Formed July 1, 1993, MDAQMD is empowered to maintain a program of air quality management for stationary sources of air contaminants under the provisions of Division 26 of the California Health and Safety Code. As required by the California Clean Air Act and the Federal Clean Air Act and Amendments, the District is responsible for air monitoring, permitting, enforcement, long-range air quality planning, regulatory development, education and public information activities related to air pollution.

MDAQMD is governed by a 13 member Board and has an annual budget of \$8 million, of which \$7 million is the operating budget and approximately \$1 million is budgeted for pass-through grant monies.

An Outdated System Was Creating a Toxic Environment

Since its inception, MDAQMD had been using a basic general accounting package for managing all of its financial matters as well as those of the Antelope Valley Air Quality Management District. One challenge the organization had with the package was that it didn't accommodate fund accounting and the different grants each District had. As a result, MDAQMD had to break out each District into three different companies in order to tie expenses to revenues as they should with fund accounting.

"When I joined the organization in 2012, my first objective was to get us onto a fund accounting system," said LaQuita Cole, Finance Manager at Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District. "I could see that the current accounting system could not enable job costing and allow us to perform true fund accounting."

MDAQMD also had separate software products for various finance functions --- for example, one for managing assets and one for storing documents --- and they were outsourcing their accounts payable, payroll and check printing. Budgeting had to be done in Excel.

MDAQMD also couldn't generate financial reports on a regular basis for its governing board. They could only provide them with a financial statement once a year at the audit and delivered a stack of Excel sheets in the interim.

"That doesn't provide the full picture of our finances that a statement of activities or a balance sheet would present," explained Cole. "It was a no brainer that we find a more robust accounting solution."



The AccuFund Solution Put New Wind in the Finance Team's Sails

Cole and her staff researched fund accounting systems through Software Advice, an online service that assists buyers with selecting the right software for their needs based on user reviews. They looked at a total of 18 accounting systems, ultimately deciding to go with the AccuFund.

"We chose AccuFund because it is what I call a 'one-stop shop,'" said Cole. "It is very, very rare to find accounting software in which literally every function of the accounting, purchasing, and budgeting departments is accommodated, and for a great price. I had a check list of 365 features we were looking for and found that AccuFund had 357 of them. It's truly the Cadillac of accounting software."

Now, all of the functions that were performed in separate software packages or being outsourced are conducted in the AccuFund Accounting Suite. In addition, MDAQMD no longer has six different companies set up for the two organizations and job costing is performed with the click of a button. The finance department is able to print checks directly from their desks and, for the first time since 1993, they are able to regularly present real financial statements to the governing board.

"Overall, the finance staff feels relief that we have AccuFund, as we got away from using paper and having records in five different places," explained Cole. "There was a bit of resistance to the change at first, but that was gone once everyone got into the software and saw how user-friendly it is and how you just need to learn one module to understand how all of them work."

As far as the system and software set up and training, Cole added, "AccuFund provides more than a great accounting system. The customer service has been very hands on, helpful and responsive, which is very unique."

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Seeing Clearly With AccuFund

A staff of four manages MDAQMD's accounting, finance, budgeting and human resources activities. Using AccuFund in these areas, they have seen numerous process improvements as well as time and cost savings.

Budgeting

With its previous system, MDAQMD had to start its budget development in January and work diligently until April to complete it. With AccuFund, the budget takes only two weeks "from beginning to end" --- a 75-80% reduction in processing time.

Payroll

Prior to implementing AccuFund, MDAQMD outsourced its payroll at a cost of \$7200 per year. The payroll person still had to do some initial processing and, once the payroll was sent out for payment processing and check printing, the turnaround was nine days. Now, MDAQMD has full control of its payroll processing and can save both the cost and time involved with outsourcing it. They can process payroll one day and distribute it the next without relying on another company to print the checks.

Accounts Payable

Before using AccuFund, MDAQMD was spending \$16,000 per year on outsourcing its payables, which included the cost of everything from having a courier pick up the payable documents to printing the checks. The entire process would take three weeks. Now, the cost is only \$1,100 per year and the process takes only three days.

Auditing

MDAQMD used to rely on and pay the auditors to compile the information they could not retrieve from their old system. Now, AccuFund pulls all the audit information together and provides the auditors with more information than they were able to receive before, lowering MDAQMD's auditing costs and reducing the audit time from two weeks to four days.

"Instead of having the auditors provide me with the financial statements, I now provide them with the financial statements and they audit them. AccuFund has relieved us of the pressure of getting these statements done," explained Cole.

Billing/Receiving

MDAQMD uses a compliance and permitting software for its billing and those invoices had to be manually entered one-by-one with its previous accounting system. There are 400 sources, some of which have 15 invoices, therefore keying all these invoices would take at least a week.

Jeff Durante at ComputerWorks NFP Solutions, the reseller from whom MDAQMD purchased the AccuFund Accounting Suite, enabled them to integrate AccuFund with the compliance and permitting software. He created an interface that can import and export the invoices --- a process that now takes only 10 minutes.

Human Resources

MDAQMD's HR person used to manage all the information for the District's 42 employees in Excel spreadsheets, which was a tedious task. With AccuFund, HR is able to save time --- from hours to minutes --- with updating employee records and has reduced the number of Excel spreadsheets used by almost 70%.

"AccuFund has made us more efficient and productive," said Cole. "We've made extreme cuts in time and expenses with several tasks and processes by bringing all of them in-house and performing them in the AccuFund Accounting Suite. I get really excited talking about AccuFund. More organizations should consider getting it."



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Let's Get Started

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