REQS TO CHECKS
FOCUS ON EFFICIENCY

The Contra Costa Community College District created a committee, the Process Expert Team, to review the purchasing processes of each of the district's three colleges, two centers and district office. This effort resulted in the Reqs to Checks concept: The team compiled best practices to create one document for all locations to use as a training aid.

About six years ago, the Contra Costa Community College District (CCCCD) Process Expert Team began compiling all the purchasing-related practices of the district's three colleges, two centers and district office to create one document as a reference to streamline the purchasing process. This resulted in the Reqs to Checks concept, which helps guide training within the purchasing process, from creating a requisition to paying the invoice. Specific processes reviewed included creating a requisition, vendor entries, purchase orders, processing change orders, receiving (fixed assets) and vouchering.

The first step was to build a team of individuals from each location whose duties are related to purchasing. The team then reviewed each process one location at a time. The results showed that each location was doing things differently, and some were more efficient than others. The team documented the best processes and revamped the procedures.

During this project, the team found issues not related to the creation of the document that needed to be addressed first in order to continue, which lengthened the time it took to finish the final document. For example, when reviewing the process of creating vendors in the Colleague system (the enterprise resource planning program used by the district), the team found that there were too many users making changes; therefore, a new screen was created with access controls. This took several months to develop and implement.

During the creation of the master document, the team found that other processes needed to be created to support the current practices. For example, the pre-requisition checklist document serves as the hardcopy backup for the person entering the requisition. It contains important information, such as manager's signatures and general ledger accounts to charge against the purchase. While this process might seem counter to the goal, it was necessary due to the limits of the district's enterprise resource planning system.

The team also discovered that new employees were trained by word of mouth, creating a legacy of incorrect processes. This underscored the importance of crafting a document that was easy to understand, which resulted in a format describing procedures step-by-step along with helpful illustrations.

With six years of collaboration and teamwork, the Reqs to Checks document was finalized. The project's success was sustained by support from the CCCCD business managers.

MILESTONES

- Create team with expertise in process evaluation

- Review processes: creating a requisition, vendor entries and purchase orders

- Produce first part of "How to Create a Requisition in Colleague" document

- Review processes: receiving (fixed assets) and vouchering

- Produce final "How to Receive in Colleague" document

QUANTIFICATION AND RESULTS

The program has expanded the availability of resources:

With Reqs to Checks as a guideline:

- Correctly utilizing the receiving module results in a 75 percent time savings for receiving clerks.

- Reviewing the receiving process results in a 50 percent time savings for the accounting department.

- Efficiency of the requisition process results in a 25 percent time savings for requisitioners.

Created the COOL4ed resource that is being used by the CCC, CSU and UC, which has open educational resources for 52 CID courses

Expanded the COOL4Ed website to include virtual labs and a wide range of free online and hybrid course curricula in career and technical education with U.S. Department of Labor grant to the CSU

Saved nearly $5 million in student costs for textbooks within the initial semester of the AB 798 program

COOL4Ed met all scheduled deadlines for delivering its projects and services

OPPORTUNITIES

The six-year development of Reqs to Checks allowed for a review of processes and a comprehensive evaluation of both efficient and inefficient procedures. The project also illuminated problems and areas for improvement within the district's financial system, including potential security concerns.

IMPACT AND BENEFIT

A financial system that has been in place for 15 years is now being utilized properly and efficiently with the use of the Reqs to Checks fixed-asset module in place.

QUALITY AND COST

The Reqs to Checks document is easy to understand and well received by the college business officers as well as the various cabinets that reviewed it. Reqs to Checks has been fully supported by the district.

Creation of Reqs to Checks did not incur any hard costs. Soft costs include two hours of administrative time per month.

PROJECT TEAM

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LESSONS LEARNED

1   Every location had their own purchasing process.

2   Many security issues were discovered while reviewing the processes.

3   The district was not fully utilizing all the modules of the financial system.