

CUSTOMER NAME

Texas Commission on
Environmental Quality –
Financial Administration

INDUSTRY

Administration and Finance

LOCATION

Austin, TX

SOLUTION HIGHLIGHTS

- Online search and retrieval provides immediate access to files
- Digital storage meets records retention requirements

BENEFITS

- Cut document retrieval time from weeks to minutes
- Increased responsiveness to audit requests
- Enabled the division to reallocate staffing resources to more critical tasks

ELECTRONIC IMAGE STORAGE HELPS AGENCY IMPROVE AUDIT RESPONSIVENESS AND ACCURACY

BUSINESS PROFILE

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) is the environmental agency for the state. TCEQ's mission is to protect the state's human and natural resources in a way that is consistent with sustainable economic development. Its goal is to ensure clean air, clean water, and the safe management of waste.

The Commission employs over 2,000 people in 16 regional offices, and has an operating budget of nearly \$540 million. Most of this budget is funded by program fees, while the remaining amount comes from a combination of federal funds, state general revenue, and other sources.

OPERATIONAL OVERVIEW

TCEQ is organized into seven offices and twenty-four divisions. The Financial Administration Division (FAD) is one of several divisions included the Office of Administrative Services. The Division is responsible for managing all of the agency's financial transactions, ensuring the integrity of its accounting records, and maintaining adequate internal controls to protect its financial assets. The FAD also provides financial support for the agency, collecting revenue and processing payments such as employee payroll and travel reimbursement.

BUSINESS NEED

From purchase orders, receiving reports, and payment vouchers, to timesheets, travel vouchers, and invoices, the division handles tremendous amounts of paperwork each day. Traditionally, this required staff members to perform manual, paper-based processes, entering information from the files and making copies of any documentation required to support a transaction. Employees also had to prepare the documents for storage, either on site or at the Texas State Library.

After processing and storing documents, the division sometimes needed to retrieve its files to respond to information requests and audits. Documents stored off-site were particularly difficult to retrieve. In fact, requests to the library could take from a few days to weeks to accommodate, and the division spent a considerable amount of time and cost copying the files and preparing them for return to storage.

When facing an audit, divisions would receive a list of items required by the auditor, and staff members would have to go through the detailed process of researching each document and preparing a set of files for review.

"They would give us the information they need to perform an audit, and it would probably take a week to gather manually," said Eddie Molina, Division Director for the Financial Administration Division.

The division needed a better solution to reduce the time employees spent searching for files and provide them with immediate access to information.

SOLUTION

The TCEQ contracted with Neubus to provide digital imaging services, scanning all related documents when they arrive, and digitizing them for easy access later. Neubus saves documents to a database, stores them on the agency's server, and then backs them up off-site.

Various financial records dating back to 1994 have been imaged and are stored in Neubus' online Electronic Services Delivery (ESD) System. Whenever someone needs a hard copy, the division also has the images stored on CD.

Staff members can quickly search for documents and view the images online, gaining immediate access to information, rather than having to find the paper file, pull documents out of it, make copies, and then re-file it.

"We're moving toward electronic copy only, and will eventually do away with paper," says Molina.

By scanning and digitizing these paper files, the division saves time and resources in document retrieval, while improving its performance on internal and external audits.

BENEFITS

IMPROVED USE OF RESOURCES

Imaging of financial records has enabled TCEQ to reallocate resources to other more critical areas, because assistance was no longer needed in the management and handling of paper files.

Additionally, because TCEQ staff can access electronic images of payment vouchers and other financial documents, they no longer need hard copies. This has resulted in space savings, as well as a reduction in the use of paper and demand on the division's copier equipment. All of these benefits result in cost savings for the agency.

"In terms of time and resources – both human and material – it's hard to beat digitizing and scanning documents," says Molina. "It's sort of a service that sells itself."

INCREASED SECURITY

With the Neubus system in place, the division can rely on electronic images as its official records.

"There's no chance of losing the image," said Molina. "It's safer, really, because documents can be lost or damaged in fire or simply be misfiled by the people using them."

IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO RECORDS

Having financial records just a few clicks away has helped the division reduce the time required to prepare audit packages and manage its daily operations. Work that once required time-consuming, manual pulling and returning of files has been replaced with an instant, online image search. Additionally, the system allows more than one staff member to view the information simultaneously, preventing process delays that can sometimes occur with physical files.

BETTER AUDIT PERFORMANCE

Most importantly, the division is able to respond more quickly to periodic audits by the state Comptroller's office.

"This is the major benefit in working with Neubus to facilitate a paperless system of record," says Molina.

"Responding to an audit takes a fraction of the time it would take when dealing with paper files. The auditors receive the information much sooner than they were expecting it."

SUMMARY

Neubus services have enabled TCEQ Financial Administration to capture records and store them electronically, increasing document accessibility and security, improving audit performance, and enabling the division to use resources more effectively.