

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts Office of the Comptroller's
MASSfinance**

(<http://massfinance.state.ma.us>)

Contact: Patricia Davis
(Patricia.Davis@osc.state.ma.us)

1. Provide a brief description of the project, including project objectives.

MASSfinance is a web site that delivers financial information to state employees, vendors, and the general public. The legacy mainframe and data warehousing systems of the state feed data to the site. Currently, MASSfinance consists of the following applications:

- *CommonCents* — which answers frequently asked questions regarding the state's finances for citizens and the global community.
- *VendorWeb* — which allows state vendors to view scheduled payments and payment histories on a "self-service" basis.
- *ManagerInfo* — a planned enhancement that will provide a web-based executive information interface to the mainframe accounting system. This application will sort, display, and aggregate departmental financial data in a flexible, intuitive, and graphical way.

The primary objectives of this initiative are to promote:

- *Improved information access* — Web access makes the state's key accounting and reporting information available to anyone. More important, the information is updated daily and available on demand, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- *A Single Face to Government* — Increasingly, state agencies are becoming interested in providing expanded access to government information and services through the Internet. Utilizing a web interface to key financial data consistently supports the state's strategic planning initiative in the areas of electronic commerce and on-line government.
- *Interoperability* — Heterogeneous technical architectures across government entities are a common hurdle to interoperability. Leveraging the opportunities and promise of web technology virtually eliminates these barriers to interoperability.

2. What improvement(s), new functionality, or business application did the project address?

Both the financial system that serves as the transactional environment for state finances and the Information Warehouse are difficult to learn and use, and are available only to state employees. MASSfinance streamlines and simplifies the use of this data by

providing an intuitive web front end. The applications empower interested parties to find out answers to financial questions on their own by allowing them to develop their own queries on-line. For example, "What is the total amount of revenue received by the Department of Social Services from Federal grants in fiscal year 1999?" Vendors are no longer limited to the state's regular business hours to reconcile their payments. At any time, vendors can find out whether specific invoices have been processed for payment, or access payment history by parameters they choose themselves. In addition, MASSfinance eases public service requirements placed on state employees who must regularly respond to FOI, media, and vendor payment inquiries.

3. Describe the schedule of the project's design, development, and implementation.

- At project outset, MASSfinance utilized a unique approach to consultant selection. The Comptroller's office and the Information Technology Division invited two consultants to participate in a technology "bake-off". The consultants' goal was to prove the ability to build a workable prototype that could utilize and/or manipulate mainframe data via a web front end. The project had to be both technically viable and meet the business requirements of the state. Both consultants worked on-site at the Comptroller's office. At the end of the evaluation period, a single consultant was chosen.
- In the subsequent month, project staff were hired (a project manager, a business analyst, and two technical analysts). These resources became familiar with the state's management, accounting, and reporting system, and began the business analysis.
- In the 3rd month, a focus group session was held for state managers to determine which functionality would be the most helpful to provide through the system. The completion of the business analysis and the initiation of the technical analysis.
- During the course of month 4, both the technical analysis and detailed designs were completed for the first two applications.
- Month 5 was spent in pre-development, with consultant staff and the state team working together to finalize the look, feel, and functionality of the site.
- In month 6, development of the site began in earnest, and a testing plan was written and approved by the project's steering committee.
- During month 7, site development continued and an implementation and marketing plan was developed and approved by the project's steering committee.
- In month 8, CommonCents and VendorWeb development were completed.
- In month 9, Testing, Implementation, and Transition Plans were put into effect.
- The system went live in September 1998 and continues to be enhanced.

4. What did the project accomplish? Who are the current and potential beneficiaries? Were other public sector entities, like component units or local

governmental entities, or private sector entities able to participate and, if so, how did this add value to the development and outcome of the project?

As well as improving access, service, and interoperability, the MASSfinance project is also about technology -- proving the applicability of a web application to government services and financial information. Server-side certificate security, legacy-to-web translation and access, SQL to web updating, dynamic document creation, and distributed systems integration were proven in the project.

Government's efforts to provide clear, concise information to the global community, citizens, vendors, and employees is often elusive. MASSfinance responds to this business need by utilizing technology to facilitate delivery of information efficiently and effectively.

The MASSfinance project was developed through a partnership between the Office of the State Comptroller and the Information Technology Division. State technical personnel and network resources participated in the joint development team. State managers provided invaluable input on the project's functionality. In addition to this public sector partnership, MASSfinance benefited from private-sector relationships as well. We recruited state vendors to participate in the development and testing of both the functionality and usability of VendorWeb; outside consultants provided conceptual design services.

5. What were the levels of personnel on the project team and how did participation on the team enhance the skills of those personnel?

In addition to full management support from the Office of the State Comptroller and the Information Technology Division, the state team included a dedicated project manager, a business analyst, and two technical analysts. The consultant team included a technical architect and a web designer. The team developed an in-depth understanding of the state's legacy system and the Information Warehouse. The team also learned how to successfully implement data replication from these applications to MASSfinance. The team gained proficiency in the software used in the project (i.e., Adobe PhotoShop, HTML, SQL, and Access). Lastly, the team utilized project management practices and team building skills.

6. List the funding source(s) (indicating those that would be innovative), costs incurred, benefits derived, and return on investment (factoring in hard and soft dollar savings).

The MASSfinance project was funded by a legislative Information Technology Bond, and will be completed for under \$1,000,000. In quantitative terms, MASSfinance will be considered successful when there is a measurable decrease in the number of telephone inquiries received by state personnel concerning general financial information (FOI requests) and vendor-specific information. In qualitative terms, the return on investment will be measured over the long term in the promotion of financial transparency and trust

from citizens, and improved quality and timeliness of financial information provided to management for decision-making purposes.

7. What measurements have been established to monitor the continued success and benefits of the project?

The Office of the Comptroller is collecting detailed statistics to enable us to monitor usage of the site including: number of hits, number of user sessions, top entry and exit pages, whether users are from the US or abroad, traffic, paths, and much more. Via email, the team is collecting user impressions from a feedback form on the site, and responding to users' questions and concerns. This information will be used to fine tune and expand the applications. In addition, an ongoing dialogue is taking place with state managers, to assess the workload reduction in information requests from citizens and vendors.

8. How replicable in other areas of the public sector or other states to do you consider this project to be? In discussing replicability, please address the following questions. What obstacles or problems might other states encounter in trying to implement this or a similar project? Specifically, how was this project communicated statewide? Were there cultural business barriers to overcome? If yes, please elaborate. Was training involved from the central project team? Were consultants involved in the project? If yes, what was their role?

The MASSfinance project is replicable wherever there is a need to make legacy information available to the general public or employees, or to strengthen partnerships with vendors. We have already been approached by other states and have shared our data models and experiences. Our team encountered and overcame challenges in the area of data replication. Developing a method to download, replicate, process, and access the huge quantities of data necessary to populate the site in short turnaround time were difficult, but achievable. The project was publicized statewide through a variety of channels: open-house demos; links on other state agency web sites; communications to all state CIOs, CFOs, and liaisons; and newsletters and bulletins. A full scale, external publicity campaign is in the works. We do not anticipate barriers to the project, as it represents an alternative, additional level of service, not an exclusive source of the data.