



CSBG Reporter helps Virginia make online reporting and compliance easier

Grant management is moving from email-based records and complicated spreadsheets - to an online solution that makes it much easier to monitor, manage, and submit records for grant compliance - and it's all thanks to CSBG Reporter™.

The Bigger Picture

A study by The Urban Institute on “Community Service Block Grant Administrative Expenses” concluded what frontline anti-poverty employees know firsthand, that “working with minimal administrative resources and funding has serious implications for organizational capacity, and ultimately on the ability to deliver programs and services to clients.”⁽¹⁾

How state offices and community action agencies monitor and manage their grant reporting affects their ability to deliver results for the people utilizing the services they provide. The more efficient the process, the more these programs can benefit the people they were created to support.

Managing and cataloguing large amounts of paperwork

Matt Fitzgerald, Community Service Program Manager, of the Office of Volunteer and Community Services in Virginia, told us about how the requirements for CSBG reporting have changed in recent years, and how reporting methods have had to change to keep up.

A federal mandate was handed down in 2014 to collect and assess a large volume of agency documents, to check for specific types of best practices at agencies in order to monitor if agencies were compliant and well-managed.

At the time of this mandate, Virginia's office relied heavily on spreadsheets and hard copies of printouts. “We'd been getting emails with documents in them since I came here. People would

send us invoices and reporting documents and everything else, and it was basically just emails, back and forth.”

Virginia Service

Matt knew it was time to address the situation. “It was going to require us to both collect a bunch of [reporting documents], look at all these documents, determine if they met compliance, keep them, catalogue them, and then, add to them when they were improved upon.”

In addition to finding a more efficient way to collect all these documents, VA staff also had various processes like invoicing and reporting, which Matt described as “extremely antiquated and definitely not efficient.”

Once it was decided to address managing Organizational Standards, it was easier to also say, “here’s some other stuff we’d like to do.” It was this combination of internal and external needs that led to the development of CSBG Reporter™.

Now in our third year of providing service to VA, the system continues to evolve.

The Online Reporting Solution

The VA CSBG Staff had worked closely with Settanni + Company, Inc. over the past decade to develop and refine National Service grant reporting software, OnCorps Reports™, so they knew our team could handle the exacting requirements and security CSBG reporting demands.

Matt notes that what makes online reporting stand out from previous methods of reporting is that **it’s immediate**. You can check it and read it as soon as it’s entered.

In addition to this, CSBG Reporter™ offers:

Collaborative Capability

CSBG Reporter™ has a record of *when something was submitted*, which “allows for a collaborative back-and-forth about the information submitted so we can talk about what was entered and can make it better, make sure it’s right. It makes it better information in the end. It’s more accurate.”

Flexibility

Matt believes that state managers will like the flexibility of CSBG Reporter™: “You have a standard base, but it’s easy to build out the kind of custom functionality that you want for your specific state, and still have that base to build off-- it’s not starting from scratch.”

Easy-to-Keep, Auditable Records

When Virginia moved to CSBG Reporter™, the software enabled them to use auditable, online approvals- which showed on both the CAA side and the state side, and which the finance department approved. “Now we can complete approvals easily, and we just print a copy of the invoice out.”

The Community Action Plan Piece

The first part of Virginia’s configuration that wasn’t simply designed to solve a problem, or address a mandate to do something, was the community action plan piece.

CSBG Reporter™ “gives you all the information you should need in order to figure out what somebody’s planning to do, both outcomes-wise as well as the types of activities they’re going to carry out, and how these tie into the needs and the goals agencies have made. **It’s a major step forward in what we do as an office, and as far as going beyond just reporting or knowing little tidbits of information, it’s an actual plan.**”

Relationship with CSBG Reporter™

The relationship between Virginia’s staff users and CSBG Reporter™ is also very collaborative, with an ability to talk through what they need.

“Together we come up with reasonable solutions, which is better than what we’ve experienced working with other software and IT vendors. It’s important to have that relationship; there’s definitely an atmosphere at CSBG Reporter™ that ‘we want to come up with solutions, so we’re willing to talk to you about the development side.’”

“I can’t imagine any company that would have developers that are more responsive. That’s impossible for me to imagine.”

Cost

Matt priced several different potential solutions, and came to the conclusion that for the type of system that was going to be built, and the type of technical assistance and user assistance needed, the cost was very, very affordable compared to the other systems they had looked at.

“In the end, it’s not *all* about the cost, it’s about the end product. You want to end up with a good product that you can use. And that’s what CSBG Reporter™ offers.”

The CSBG Reporter™ Solution

CSBG Reporter™ software gives CSBG State Managers an at-a-glance view of how Community Action Agencies are making an impact in communities across their state. We work closely with State Managers to ensure our online system is designed to be affordable, accessible, and efficient.

Please contact us today to schedule a short demo and see what CSBG Reporter can do for your state: info@csbgreporter.com

Sources:

(1):<https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/25566/412601-Community-Services-Block-Grant-Administrative-Expenses.PDF>